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Rhys Davis, Professional Writer: Nation, Class, Identity in the Literary Marketplace

by

Huw Edwin Osborne ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Books are not only the creations of individual writers, but also the manifestation of a range of influences from publishers, to reviewers, to booksellers, to readers, and so on. As an author who lived entirely and precariously by his writing from the age of 25 until his death, Rhys Davies (1901-1978) offers insights into this world of literary production and circulation. Particularly, his representations of nation, class, gender, and sexuality are intimately bound to his negotiation of "art" and the market. Typically, Davies deployed the discourse of art in an attempt to reclaim the authority that he lost as a market-writer, and his anxieties regarding his professionalism deeply inflect his writing: His representations of Wales pander to a popular English taste for Welsh fare, his representations of class degrade into a misogynist dismissal of popular readerships, and his representations of homosexuality are coded as a high-aesthetic resistance to the market that both denied him success and silenced his sexuality. However much we may like to think of Davies as an Anglo-Welsh writer, or a lower-middle-class writer, or a gay writer, he was first and foremost a professional writer.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADE	A. Dywe Evans
AG	Arnold Gyde
CL	Charles Lahr
GB	George Bullock
GF	Gilbert Fabes
GHW	G. H. Wells (West)
GRB	George R. Busy
HEB	H. E. Bates
HH	Hettie Hilton
HRHRC	Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre
KD	Kay Dick
HWS	Harry Warren Schwartz
KA	Ken Annaken
LQ	Louis Quinain
NLW	National Library of Wales
PH	Philip Henderson
RHAL	Random House Archive and Library
RD	Rhys Davies
RG	Robert Gibbings
RCC	Rupert Croft-Cooke
RM	Raymond Marriott
SL	Sterling Library

Foreword

"Who the 'ell is he, then?"

When my colleagues ask me what I am working on and I respond, "Rhys Davies," I am invariably met with a polite smile and a shake of the head. They have never heard of him.

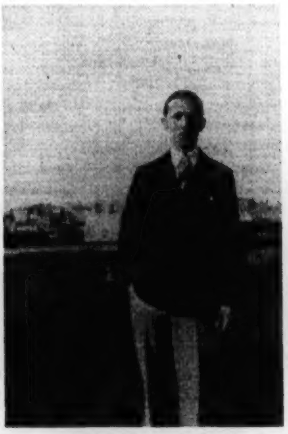

FIGURE 1: RHYS DAVIES, AGED 20

Davies's anonymity bothered me until I visited his hometown, Blaenclydach in the Rhondda, South Wales. I located his childhood home with its memorializing commemorative fame-bestowing plaque, and it was reassuring to see his name neatly inscribed upon something as substantial as a building, sitting squat and secure in its long row of miners' houses, immovable as the mountains above it. "There!" I thought, "he did exist physically—he was more than the forgettable ephemera of his writing." Pleased, I crossed the street to The Central, the pub that features in much of Davies's writing of his hometown. While standing at the bar, I was asked, obvious stranger that I was, what I was doing in Blaenclydach. When I answered, confidently and a little proudly, that I was doing research on Rhys Davies, the gentleman responded…"Who the 'ell is he, then?" Defeated, I realized that a well-meaning plaque, while comforting to me, was not equal to the task of casting off the veils of anonymity enshrouding poor Rhys.

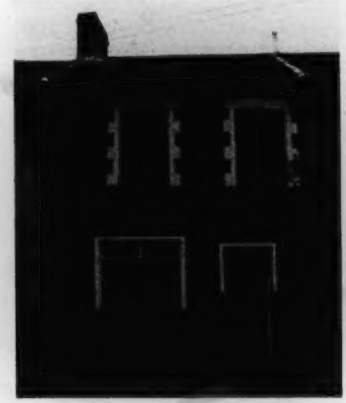

FIGURE 2: DAVIES'S CHILDHOOD HOME AS IT LOOKS TODAY.

However, Davies's relative anonymity constitutes a large part of my interest in him. You don't know who he is, but *he was there*. He read the essays of Virginia Woolf and admired them. He listened to E. M. Forster lecture on Woolf and thought he heard a note of criticism in the words. On one evening he watched Dylan Thomas play with his vomit, while on another he sat politely as Edith Sitwell read poetry next to T. S. Eliot who listened pale-faced in his overcoat. He attended parties with Louis Golding and Rupert Croft-Cooke. He grew to hate Liam O'Flaherty. He went to a brothel with H.E. Bates, where neither took a room. He got into a car accident after visiting T. F. Powys and was looked down upon by Aldous Huxley. He played disciple and friend to D. H. Lawrence in the early years of Davies's career and the last years of Lawrence's life.

He was there. And while he was there he wrote twenty novels and published over a hundred short stories in the same pages as many writers now well remembered by history. He was well received in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Occasionally, he was their novel-of-the-week, so he most certainly was there and presumably people knew who he was…for a while at least.

So what happened to him? I don't mean, what happened after he died and we all went about the business of remembering more important people; I mean what happened to him as he went through a literary career that was doomed to oblivion. Did he know? Did he feel that he shared the halls with giants; that he had to dance beneath their lumbering ascension, trying to survive and not be bowled over? For this was a man who wanted nothing more than to write, who wanted nothing more than to be a writer. What does it mean to be a writer for fifty years—to struggle with other writers, with critics and reviewers, with publishers and publics—to work one's whole life to be a writer…and be forgotten…in one's own hometown…in the bar across the street from one's own house?

FIGURE 3: THE CENTRAL TODAY.

Davies offers an opportunity to peek into the culture of literary production from the privileged position of the "little man." He was not destined to be a famous writer, but he was a dedicated one whose self-consciousness about his career provides insights into the kinds of anxieties that produce a body of literature.

Introduction

Rhys Davies was born in 1901 in Blaenclydach, Clydach Vale, a tributary of the Rhondda valley in South Wales. There are a lot of geographical qualifiers in this address and, to be sure, Davies grew up in a world of clearly demarcated and fiercely defended microgeographies. It is appropriate, therefore, that Davies was acutely aware of borders of all kinds, both physical and ideological. The borders of his youth, invisible to the visitor but essential to local identities, ran everywhere—dividing neighborhoods, cutting main streets in half, keeping pub clear of chapel, crisscrossing each mind. Dai Smith illustrates this phenomenon when describing Tonypandy, which is just down the street from Davies's home and which is, to me, indistinguishable from Clydach, Blaenclydach, or Clydach Vale:

> The boundaries of somewhere like Tonypandy are indefinable. Those who have lived there will tell you, within a street's length or span where Tonypandy 'proper' began Llwynypia ended, or where Clydach Vale swoops down to end in the 'grander precincts' of De Winton and Dunraven Street or when you have left Tonypandy and entered Penygraig. This intense delineation of territory is nothing to do with council boundaries, political wards or ancient land grants. It is certainly not to do with a separating, physical sense of place since all of mid-Rhondda, and, by extension, large tracts of the coal mining valleys in South Wales blur indistinguishably the one into the other. What it means is that no one ever actually came from 'the Valleys'. They came from those segments of individual and local experience, geographically de-limited by mutual consent, through which the wider bonding summarized by a term like the Valleys is given reality. Otherwise it remains an abstraction, almost a cliché. So, 'Where do you come from?'—once as insistent a query in place-conscious Wales as its follow up, 'What do you do *now*?'—is defined exactly as a locality whose parameters are known by those who need to know them. Tonypandy was, and might have remained, simply a framework for experiencing social identity. It became a country of the mind. (99-100)

Davies, who was an avid border-crosser all his life, came from a context of subtle division and definition. But the borders that Davies experienced were not simply geographical. They were also the borders between men and women, the borders between masculinity, femininity, and his disavowed homosexuality, the borders between pub and chapel, the borders between Welsh and English, between Anglican and Nonconformist, between past and present.

Much of Davies's formative experience occurred along boundaries upon which he existed liminally, never able to settle comfortably into available definitions of selfhood and belonging. My thinking here is described by Bakhtin's dismissal of the "interior territory" of culture:

> One must not…imagine the realm of culture as some sort of spatial whole, having boundaries but also having internal territory. The realm of culture has no internal territory: it is entirely distributed along the boundaries, boundaries pass everywhere, through its every aspect....Every cultural act lives essentially on the boundaries: in this is its seriousness and significance; abstracted from boundaries it loses its soil, it becomes empty, arrogant, it degenerates and dies. (qtd in Morson and Emerson 51)

Bakhtin privileges the boundary against the interior territory. He claims, in fact, that there is no interior territory, securely defined within its oppositional boundaries, but only sites of negotiation that intersect infinitely with other sites of negotiation. When culture is simplified from its multiplicity and flux, when we seek to render it static and "comprehensible," we lose sight of its active reality. Davies is a liminal figure in that he could not rest comfortably within the established boundaries of his experience, but strained against them, operating constantly in their active negotiation.

For Davies was a grocer's son in a coal-mining community; he was a Welshman who would leave Wales to write about his homeland from London; and he was gay in, initially, a heavily masculine and homophobic context, and later, in the freer, though still repressive London. As a grocer's son, Davies lived with, but was not part of, the working community of Blaenclydach. Although surrounded by proletarian forms of life he was excluded from them by his petit-bourgeois status. Living so closely with a mining community, however, Davies could not help but identify and sympathize with the working life constituting his daily experience. In his writing, therefore, he turns again and again to this community of his youth. However, this identification could never be complete, not only because of class restrictions, but because Davies's gayness made it extremely difficult to live within the oppressively masculine nature of working-class male culture. As Wales was increasingly defined by the densely populated industrial South and its working communities, Davies had to look beyond the borders of Wales to find an accommodating context for an identity that did not conform to the dominant forms of life in which he grew up. In desperation, he turned to writing and to London, but continually returned to Wales as the primary setting for his stories and novels.

Davies experienced obviously complex relationships to his national, class, and sexual identities as each of these "categories" related to one another. In his autobiographical writing, Davies imagines himself as resisting the limited definitions of selfhood offered by the Rhondda, including among his dislikes, "Taking a lease of a house or flat. The prospect of settling anywhere. The thought of frontiers becoming difficult to cross. Hospitals. Prisons" (NLW MS 20897 E 108 1948). This is a man who fears immobility, containment and confinement, and who needs movement and transgression; who lived in movement, spending much of his life going from London, to countryside, to the Continent, to Blaenclydach, moving from flat to flat and having no fixed address save the forwarding addresses of friends or his publisher. Davies's invocation of hospitals and prisons is especially revealing of the gay Davies in their symbolic power as authorities that identify, "cure," and punish deviance. Davies seems to operate in a Foucauldian awareness of the mechanisms of pleasure and power. For instance, a scene edited out from the second draft of his autobiography, *Print of a Hare's Foot* (1967) he revels in the literal act of border-crossing and demonstrates a "pleasure that comes from exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpitates, brings to light; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it" (Foucault 45):

FIGURE 4: RHYS DAVIES IN FINAL MARINA, RIVIERA DI PONENTE, ITALY, 1930

> Customs sheds are fairy palaces to me. To this day they are halls of magic adventure. I would not have their guardians—apparently much-detested in Newhaven by travellers' [sic] coming into England—thrown into the harbour. I like their expert rummaging into my luggage and their wholesale suspicion of villainy in the human race. The charm of a trip abroad would lose a Gilbert and Sullivan antic if these guardians were abolished. ~~I always try to select the most blackguardly-looking officer for examination of my~~

> ~~luggage.~~ It is a joy to witness a foreign woman, especially if she is French, do her stuff for these cement-faced male hags. A customs shed at boat-time would make a good theme for a ballet. (NLW 21533 C 148)

Davies makes a spectacle of border-crossing and heightens the theatrical and over-watched nature of borders and the differences that borders attempt to naturalize. His relish of this anarchic scene travesties authority even as he submits to it, rendering the power of these "fairy palaces" illusory. There is an almost erotic indulgence in his enjoyment of being "rummaged" by the "guardians," of showing up the whole performance of guarding against differences, and of casually casting aside difference and boundary in the words "male hags." Davies, who rejected the limitations of the Rhondda, liked to play along those intersecting boundaries that Bakhtin describes as the very life of culture.

Davies in Circulation

However, Davies's experience of, and sensitivity to, borders makes it all the more surprising that many of his novels fall so readily to stereotype and cliché. Once he entered into circulation within the mechanisms of literary production, dissemination and reception, his identity was repackaged into easily recognizable and marketable commodities. For however else Davies may have sought to identify himself, he was first and foremost a professional writer committed to making a living by his writing. As one would expect from such a commitment, Davies's output was considerable. Between 1926 and 1960, barely a year went by without a publication, and he was still writing and publishing in the final years of his life. His oeuvre consists of eighteen novels, over one hundred short stories—published in periodicals, anthologies, and collections of his work—two historical/topographical books on Wales, one work of biography, an autobiography, plays, essays, broadcasts, reviews, and a handful of poetry. Davies managed to live entirely by his writing and was, therefore, largely dependent upon whatever means of publication were available.

This dependence constitutes the essential argument of my dissertation. Davies is not *primarily* important because he is Welsh, or gay, or a shop owner's son in the Rhondda; he is not *primarily* important in terms of nation, sexuality, or class. For Davies would likely have been of no interest whatsoever had he never been published: He had to enter into the field of literary production before he became culturally meaningful in any other sense. This is not to say that nation, sexuality, and class were not formative influences in Davies's writing, for indeed, the fact that they were formative is necessarily one of the premises of my larger argument. But, as a professional writer whose sole source of income derived from his ability to produce large quantities of fiction, Davies was particularly dependent upon the literary market and this market was the precondition for the forms that his writing took; therefore, the national, sexual and economic expressiveness of his writing must not be separated from Davies's role as a professional writer.

Many have drawn attention to Davies's consummate professionalism (Aberpennar, Callard 143, Harris 356, Gwyn Jones, Glyn Jones 53, Mathias 340, Rees 70, Thomas 39, Knight 68, Dixon 40), but no one has made more than passing reference to it or explored its implications for Davies's writing. Davies often expressed a crass need to eat, cloth, and house himself, rather than an artistic transcendence over such matters, and he was always aware of his writing as existing within a market: He was aware, as Raymond Williams was aware, that "[p]roduction for the market involves the conception of the work of art as a commodity, and of the artist, *however else he may define himself*, as a particular kind of commodity producer" (44 italics added); he was aware that "whatever purposes cultural practice may serve, its means of production are unarguably material" (Williams 87). Davies, who did not have the kind of financial security one would hope to garner from a lifetime of writing until very late in his career (and even then his money came from legacies rather than writing), never had the luxury of forgetting that he produced "art" for a market. While Davies managed to sustain himself by his writing, he was never particularly successful, and certainly never achieved the recognition for which he longed.

Davies began his career in London, writing with London-based publishers. At first, this dependence meant writing stories for small private magazines and other low budget ventures that actively marketed themselves in opposition to establishment writers, critics, and publishers. It meant publishing novels with fledgling publishers doomed to bankruptcy. It meant turning to the small market of special editions. Occasionally, Davies landed a story in the more prestigious pages of *The London Mercury*, *This Quarter*, or *The Evening Standard*, and eventually he found a measure of security, first with Putnam and then with Heinemann. Whatever the case, throughout his career, Davies was less engaged in the increasingly remote world that he wrote about in his fiction of Wales, and more immediately aware of the local experience of getting into print through his circulation within a network of acquaintances that operated in various relations to the literary cultures he occupied. The last forty years of Davies's career were with Heinemann, which meant that he eventually wrote from within the literary establishment; however, even here he was a marginal figure and still very much preoccupied by what it meant to be a writer of limited financial success.

The atmosphere in which Davies launched into a life of writing was the bohemian world of 1920s London. Recent scholarship has revised the modernist ideal of a revolutionary art resisting a philistine middle-class by uncovering the material and commercial motivations underwriting the production of modernism.

In *The Public Face of Modernism*, Mark S. Morrison argues that the market for magazines in Britain and America emerged in the same process that saw the rise of advertising and commodity culture. The modernist magazine, therefore, emerged alongside commodity advertising that Morrison defines as "a mobilizer of desire that has been the center of twentieth century consumer culture" (4). Consequently, modernist magazines, far from secluding the alienated artist from the mass, were deeply engaged in assumptions of their public function. The modernists within these magazines "tended to see the social role of art as an issue related to the nature of public discourse" (6). Rather than indulging in aestheticism, they regretted the "increasingly private character of art" (6); and while not necessarily optimistic about markets, they were certainly mindful of the "tools of publicity offered by the mass market" (7). As Morrison explains,

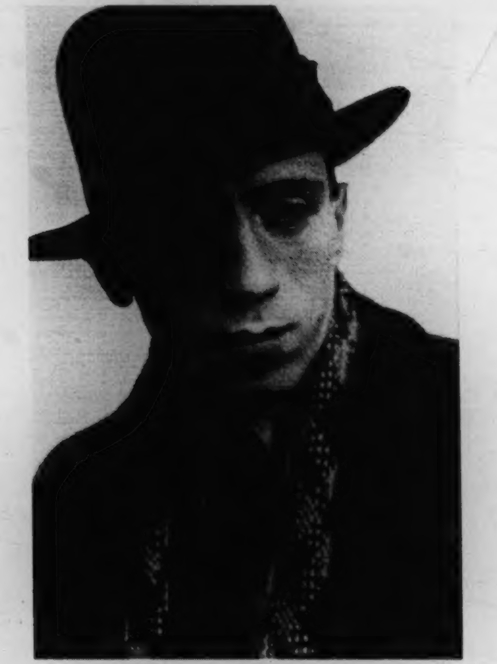

FIGURE 5: THE YOUNG WRITER. RHYS DAVIES, AGED 26 (28?).

> The relatively low cost of producing a small-scale magazine…and the fantastic success new advertising techniques and print venues were having with vast audiences presented the seductive possibility of intervening in public discourse. An early and influential set of modernist authors and editors, including Dora Marsden, Wyndham Lewis, James Joyce, Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, Ezra Pound (at times), William Carlos Williams, and even socialist

> experimenters like Floyd Dell, and Max Eastman, did not promote a myth of decline about the early twentieth-century public sphere, and, indeed, saw the new commercial magazine genres and the advertising that supported them as providing opportunities for modernism. (9-10)

While modernist magazines and their myriad private presses constitute, as Bradbury and MacFarlane assert, a useful index of experimental activity in the early twentieth century (203), they are not as clearly oppositional to large commercial publishers as we may like to think. Modernism, however else it is imagined, must be understood in its *relation* to its markets rather than simply its *revolution* against them.

Not only were literary magazines deeply engaged in the consumer culture that enabled their emergence, but they constituted an important source of income for the struggling writer. As a short story writer, Davies was an able navigator of a range of magazines: He placed stories in the pages of such short-lived ventures as *The New Coterie*, *The London Aphrodite*, and *The Window*; in such highbrow venues as *This Quarter* and *Transition* and the more conservative pages of *The English Review*, *The London Mercury*, and *The Evening Standard*. The magazines that proliferated in the 1920s provided young writers with a range of options for getting their writing into print. In one of his many autobiographical volumes, Davies's friend, contemporary and one-time flat-mate, Rupert Croft-Cooke, looks back at the 1920s from the 1960s and remembers the magazine market as the only way a young writer could begin a career: "These were the days of the short story. There were scores of monthly magazines on the bookstalls which published nothing else and many writers lived on them. From the grandeur of *The Strand*, which featured Kipling and Conan Doyle, to the little magazines known by their colour, the *Blue*, the *Red*, the *Violet*, the variety was enormous" (117). Croft-Cooke wonders how writers in the years following the proliferation of magazines managed to make a living:

> How, I cannot help wondering, do young people, determined to make a living by writing, start today? Is it still possible to do as I did and pay ill-spared shillings for unlikely-looking periodicals displayed on Smith's bookstalls, take them home, think out what their editors might buy and try to supply them? If he can write fiction for women's magazines he can still make a living but is unlikely to do anything else. Or he may be swallowed alive by television, films, or advertising. (112)

Croft-Cooke imagines a familiar descending hierarchy from writing, to women's fiction, to film and television, and, finally, to advertising. There are certain oppositional assumptions regarding quality working here, but Croft-Cooke nonetheless understands the writing of fiction as operating within a recognizable market and existing within the same continuum as advertising and the consumer culture that it implies.

To say that Davies was a professional writer, however, is not to dismiss the importance of artistic discourse, for his troubled relationship to the market only heightens his artistic insecurities. For there was, of course, a pervasive discourse of *art-for-art's-sake* that sought to re-center the artist in the face of the distribution of culture among the threatening multitude of mass markets and commodity culture. It is the conflict that Orwell illustrates in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), in which the struggling young poet, Gordon Comstock, throws up a successful career in advertising for the dubious freedom of the life of the impoverished poet only to discover himself equally prey to the "money-god." Earlier still, it is the conflict in the two central authors of George Gissing's *New Grub Street*: The novelist, Edward Reardon, refuses to write for the popular audiences that Jasper Milvain serves so successfully in the pages of chatty magazines. Much of Davies's conception of art recalls the conflicts of these novels and is very much in keeping with John Carey's discussion in *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (1992). Carey argues that the dramatic rise in literacy in England at the end of the 19th-century created new reading audiences that threatened the hegemony of the cultural elite. The Education Act of 1871 led to an "uncultivated" mass of readers whose reading interests bypassed traditional cultural standards. In particular, the popular newspaper created an alternative reading culture that was governed by sales figures rather than the ostensibly sacred standards of taste and distinction cherished by the cultural elite (Carey 6-7). The reaction from the cultural elites seeking to preserve the authority of their particular brand of "literacy" evident, for example, in the criticism of F. R. Leavis and the poetry of T. S. Eliot, was predictably shrill with panic. As Carey argues, "modernist" culture and literature as we understand them today were largely formed by their reaction to the reading masses. Modernism rejected the mass and constituted "a defeat of their power, the removal of their literacy, the denial of their humanity" (Carey 21). Its resistance of realism, its cultivation of irrationality and obscurity, and its commitment to the "difficult," in Eliot's phrase, was all part of a process of alienating the masses by placing "art" beyond their reach (Carey 17). For some, therefore, to write for the mass necessarily meant to lower one's standards to the level of an uneducated literate multitude. To aspire toward the acquisition of a popular mass audience was to sacrifice one's claim to the role of artist. The artist catered to the specialized tastes of the few, while the popular writer catered to the demands of the cost-benefit ratio of the mass market. As a last recourse, Davies, who, like Gordon Comstock and Edward Reardon, failed to achieve wealth and fame in a mass market, turned to such elitist notions of art: as an economically marginal author he sought to recenter himself discursively as an artist.

The vocabulary through which Davies defined his anxious relationship to art and the market was largely located in those charged words of the early twentieth century, highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow. Janice Radway illustrates the anxieties informing these concepts in her discussion of the emergence of a middlebrow reading audience in early twentieth-century America through such emergent institutions as The Book-of-the-Month Club. Radway explores the controversy over the role of the book clubs as an "extended debate about the role of culture in a modern democracy and mass society" ("Scandal" 705). What was at stake, Radway claims, was "the appropriate relationship between individuals and the entity called 'culture'" ("Scandal" 710). The selection committees of book clubs selected the fruits of high culture and offered them to a wider audience at a low cost. To the self-proclaimed protectors of so-called "high" culture, the middlebrow represented a new stratum of cultural consumption that threatened the securely dichotomous relationship between high and low. Further, by its sheer size and by the scale of its production, the middlebrow threatened to standardize taste and *massify* culture.

Professionally speaking, Davies voices a complex of author-identities that operated on the boundaries of art and the market: He indulges in elitist defenses of art against the market; he adopts a populist voice that respects the power of cheaply produced literature for mass readerships; and he is the savvy market writer who exploits many forms of publication for his living. I do not, therefore, want to reduce Davies to a simple economic equation, for "the market," as I conceive it, is not simply determined by the price of books, but concerns the history of the book and the complex matrices of its production, dissemination, and reception. Robert Darnton, for instance, argues that we need to be sensitive to the entire apparatus of a book's manifestation in history and culture and calls for an interest in the entire "communications circuit" (111) of a book's production: it is a circuit "that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader" (111). This approach is very close to Pierre Bourdieu's claim that we must consider the entire "field of cultural production," which not only includes

> the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work—critics, publishers, gallery directors [anthologists?] and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such.... In short, it is a question of understanding works of art as a *manifestation* of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated. (37)

Both Darnton and Bourdieu invite us to resist the temptation of reading Davies as either an autonomous artistic agent or as a commodity. He is not simply a function of economic transactions, but of the complete network of expressions and actions that create and influence the desires, expectations, values and fantasies of a culture of literary production and consumption. A book's, or an author's, position in the literary market is never simply a reduction to price or cost of production: It is also the manifestation of a range of intersecting influences, from the standards touted in reviews, to the language of advertisements, to the opinions of friends, to the collector's appraisal, to the backing of publishers, to the appearance of books, and to an author's sense of how all these factors operate together in relation to his creative work.

The "circuit" or "field" in which Davies produced must allow for the more subtle operations working within it. It must allow for the casual acquaintances that potentially connect the various sites of the book's life cycle; for the private negotiations behind the scenes; the predilections and idiosyncrasies of authors, publishers, reviewers, and so on. As Darnton continues,

> [a] writer may respond in his writing to criticisms of his previous work or anticipate receptions that his text will elicit. He addresses implicit readers and hears from explicit reviewers. So the circuit runs full cycle. It transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again. Book history concerns each phase of this process and the process as a whole, in all its variations over space and time and in all its relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment. (111)

Throughout my dissertation, therefore, I rely very heavily upon Davies's correspondence as it reveals him in relation to such intersecting influences.[1] From his letters to other writers, reviewers, booksellers, and publishers, I paint a picture of Davies as a man who was very conscious of his writing as a career. For instance, Davies carried out a four-year debate with one of his reviewers, G. H. Wells (later G. H. West) that had a very strong influence upon his writing at that time. Similarly, Davies's correspondence with booksellers engaged with very specialized conceptions of the book's relation to culture. Aside from letters, Davies published in magazines of varying standing, in special editions, and in the more marketable novel format, and was, therefore, very conscious of what physical forms literature could take and was evidently mindful of how these forms bore upon his position as an author. For instance, the wide circulation of the mass produced novel had a more popular and less distinguished cache than the hand-crafted special edition. Similarly, the low profile of cheap, small press, avant-garde magazines shored up a bohemian elitism Davies was also aware of his relationships to various publishers, his sales, his popularity (or the lack thereof), and his letters reveal him in an anxious relationship to these mechanisms. So, when we consider Davies as a Welsh writer, or a working-class writer, or a gay writer, we do well to emphasize the *apparently* secondary category of 'writer' and ask what Davies's awareness of his circulation within literary culture brought to his negotiation of an already complex identity.

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[1] Davies's letters are housed in The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; in Sterling Library, London; in The Random House Archive and Library, and in The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, Austin.

The first chapter of my dissertation establishes Davies's awareness of the networks of his literary culture and situates him in relation to those networks. In this chapter, I demonstrate Davies's often contradictory location of himself in relation to an ideally conceived art and a more crassly understood market. Davies is clearly aware of a dominant debate concerning the place of art and literature in a widening and popularizing market, and anxious of his position on the border of these two categories. As a relatively unsuccessful writer, Davies was anxious for fame and commercial success, but the types of fame he sought varied. He not only dreamed of the cultural capital of the artist, ideally free from financial constraints, but also the financial success of the bestseller. Davies bounced between justifying his lack of success by claiming the disinterest of the artist, and lamenting his inability to break into the heights of literary success and security.

The second chapter discusses the influence of Davies's dependence upon a market that continually recognized him as the representative Welshman. Davies could not write of Wales without acknowledging the largely English consuming public. His Wales, therefore, is not entirely a personal one and very far from what could be called a nationalistic one, despite his often-rhapsodic evocations of the Romantic Welsh past. This chapter demonstrates how Davies began his career by cultivating a marketable self-image as the representative Welshman that served him well into the 1950s. I focus on those moments where Davies is caught pandering to English notions of Welshness; where his Wales is harmlessly quaint and comic, selfishly unruly, and perfidious, or an exciting and exotic land for the tourist reader. However, never comfortable as the crass market writer, Davies eschewed nationalism in favour of claims for the universality of art, and these claims have less to do with a resistance to nationalism than they do with his disavowal of his marketability and of his reduction of Wales to a commodity.

The third chapter explores the English readership's expectation that the Welsh writer be a writer of the working-class. Davies's understanding of both the materially determined working life and his idealized working-class were informed by both his need to become a recognizable and marketable working-class writer, politically minded and economically aware, and his artistic need to emancipate himself from things material. Ultimately, Davies's representations of class have far more to do with anxieties concerning his readership—his fear of lowbrow and middlebrow readers—than they do with making political statements on behalf of a class. This chapter reveals Davies as a middlebrow writer more often dismissed through an association with the "feminine reader" than acknowledged as a politically relevant writer.

The fourth and final chapter argues that Davies's unmarketable queer representations are bound up in the queered (aestheticized/dandified) artistic difference that Davies cultivated in opposition to the market and his materially limited and masculine working-class youth. This artistic/sexual difference also has much to do with Davies's apparent need to return to the Wales that sexually exiled him. So, in some respects, this chapter looks back through the preceding three chapters to explain how this least visible of Davies's identities informs the most visible identities of artist, Welshman and petit-bourgeoisie. I therefore make much of the fact that Davies's sexuality is almost entirely absent from the evidence privileged hitherto: His sexuality finds its clearest expression (however obliquely) in his writing rather than in the nebula of advertising, reviews, and correspondence surrounding it. His queer subject matter seems to have survived despite (or perhaps because of) the culture industry's silence on the matter. This final chapter outlines the close relationship in which Davies understood his gay and artistic identities, reveals the strategies of coding or silently speaking his queer themes in his writing, and discusses the importance of this unobserved aspect of Davies's identity in the writing of an author whose career has operated in close relation to literary culture.

I think most would agree that, as critics of culture, we have a responsibility to resist master-narratives and any overly homogenizing conceptions of the workings of any cultural space or moment. I think we may agree that culture is variable, multiple, and in constant movement. This is not to say that there is no certainty; that there is nothing that we can say with any historical accuracy; that there is only a relativist space of epistemological play. I believe that there are claims that can be made with historical certainty and that without such claims there is little to build anything of interest upon. Still, within those certainties there is a considerable variety. A life, in this case Davies's life, is a projection across, or through a set of cultural variables. As such, it is a vantage point from which to observe some of the varieties of ways in which that culture is an expression of, or expresses, that life. Davies offers an opportunity to observe culture in movement, in the moments of its complex operations. So, on one level, this dissertation is an exercise in biography—a rarefaction of culture to idiosyncrasy—but it is a biography of a certain kind. It is a biography not just of a man, but of a man as he expresses and reveals a set of questions that are historically and culturally useful beyond his discrete experience. This dissertation, one could say, is cultural criticism as biography.

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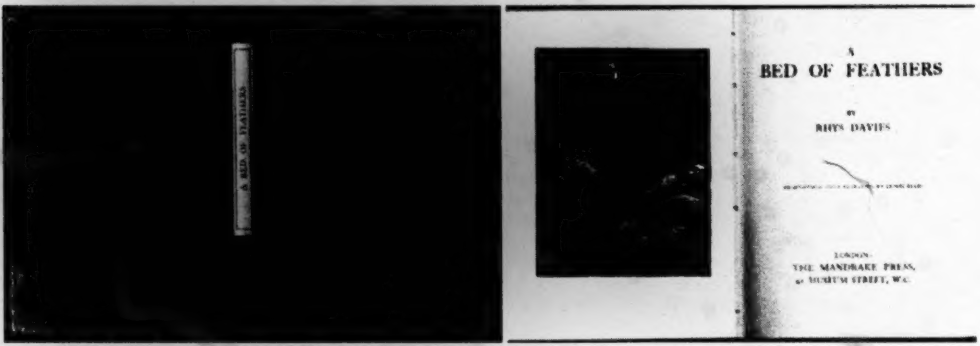
Chapter One

"The Elinor Glyn of the Highbrows": The Author's Identity in Literary Marketplaces

When Rhys Davies's *A Bed of Feathers* was published in 1929 by P. R. Stephensen's Mandrake Press, its *New Age* reviewer accused Davies of having read too much D. H. Lawrence and dismissed him as "the highbrow's Elinor Glyn" (S. 143). Three years later, we find the same estimation in the *Spectator* review of *Count Your Blessings*: "Mr. Rhys Davies tells what is in essence a lowbrow story in clear and sensitive prose" (Strong 342). The central defining anxiety behind Davies's relationship to his market lies in the paradoxical characterization of him as the "Elinor Glyn of the highbrows." Elinor Glyn, a best-selling author of sensational romances, made the transition into Hollywood film-writing in the 1920s. She is now most famous for the 1927 film about sex appeal, *It*, adapted by her from one of her novels. By the time the *New Age* reviewer dismissed Davies in her name, she was recognizable as an icon of the sensational and popular mass-market commodity. This reviewer suggests that although Davies may have had "It" when it came to titillation, he fell sadly short of the expectations of "true literature." These expectations are encoded within the review in the form of D. H. Lawrence. Presumably, Lawrence is the standard that Davies has failed to live up to and Elinor Glyn is the enemy at the gates threatening the standards that the reviewer sought to reaffirm through his dismissal of Davies. Nor was this an isolated perception of the relationship between Lawrence and Glyn. Aldous Huxley draws much the same contrast in a letter to his father in 1915: "What an odd business it was about the suppression of Lawrence's book, *The Rainbow*. It is always the serious books that get sat on—how much better to suppress Mrs. Glyn" (qtd. in Sexton 36). Davies, it seems, occupied an ambiguous space between these two figures of highbrow and lowbrow culture.

But if Davies was so bad, why refer to him as highbrow at all? There must be something beyond *what* he wrote that exalted him to such an identification. The simple answer is, I think, also the correct one. The Mandrake Press was a small press established by one of the publishers/editors of a little "highbrow" magazine, *The London Aphrodite*, connected to Davies's coterie of artists. The Mandrake emerged just a year before *A Bed of Feathers* to produce a special edition of D. H. Lawrence's paintings at the same time that Lawrence was losing faith in mainstream commercial publishers *and* at the same time that Lawrence and Davies were becoming friends. The small circulation and cost of 3s 6d for one story excluded *A Bed of Feathers* from any taint of commercial success. So its titillating content would have been reserved for the few discerning readers interested in its discrete and specialized market. And so, when the *New Age* reviewer read Davies's Mandrake Press book, he saw Elinor Glyn in highbrow clothing, thereby locating Davies in a conflict between the popular and the highbrow.

This conflict haunted Davies throughout his career, but never more than at this time, at the precise moment when he was trying to make the transition into a wider market. This review came not long after Davies wrote to his friend and publisher, Charles Lahr, "I shall *have* to make my next novel more popular in theme. I mustn't get the reputation of being unsaleable" (RD to CL 1928 SL V 36 iii). It came not long before he would explain to Robert Gibbings, the president of the Golden Cockerel Press (another publisher of special editions), "I'm no Christmas author" (RD to RG 20 Dec. 1932 HRHRC). In the same vein he complained to an American book dealer in 1935, "I don't suppose I ever will be a best seller!" (RD to HWS 3 July 1935 HRHRC), and, in 1940, to his friend and fellow writer, George Bullock, "But, alas, I'm beginning to see that it's not in me to write a best seller" (RD to GB 1940 HRHRC). At the same time, and in contrast to these self-conscious lamentations on his inability to sell, Davies made defensive affirmations of his purely "literary" indifference to the market that excluded him. He claimed that his novel *Honey and Bread* had been a success "at least from the literary point of view" (RD to HWS 3 July 1935 HRHRC). He wrote to a reviewer friend, G. H. Wells, that the cost and production of a special guinea edition of his story, "The Skull," seemed unnecessary "from [their] 'literary' point of view" (RD GHW 13 July 1936 HRHRC), and in 1942, he distinguished between the types of readers he ostensibly catered to in a letter to another friend and reviewer, Raymond Marriott: "My book came out and appears to have pleased persons—literate persons, that is" (RD to RM 3 Oct. 1942 NLW MS 20897 E). Davies's self-definition was plagued by the same confusion evident in his reviews.


A
BED OF FEATHERS
BY
RHYS DAVIES

LONDON
THE MANDRAKE PRESS,
MUSEUM STREET, W.C.

FIGURES 6 AND 7: COVER AND FRONTISPIECE AND TITLE PAGE OF THE MANDRAKE PRESS EDITION OF *A BED OF FEATHERS* (1929).

The central conflict illustrated by characterizing Davies as the "Elinor Glyn of the highbrows," therefore, is the conflict of the writer who lived precariously by his writing for most of his career, who wanted financial security and the backing of a reputable commercial publisher, but who nonetheless—and partly because of his lack of financial success—cultivated an idea of the artist and the artist's role that eschewed any taint of commercial motive. At times, Davies wanted to be taken seriously as an artist, and, at others, he longed for the popularity of the best-seller's audience. When he wrote to Lahr in 1928 describing Charlie Ashleigh as too "terribly commercial," he acknowledged that he was himself also "a little tainted with that, having been reared and working in that atmosphere." But Ashleigh, Davies claimed, had "carried it to a nauseating degree" (RD to CL 14 Nov. 1928 SL V 36 iii). Davies was trying to draw some rather fine lines here, going so far as to vaguely excuse his awareness of the market as somehow contingent upon the working-class context of his youth. Regardless of his rationalizations, we may read Davies here as condemning in another what he recognized, and to a certain degree resented, in himself: his dependence upon a market that had so far denied him, and would continue to deny him in the future, both the full cultural sanctification of the serious artist and the popular approval of the bestseller.

So, Davies's anxious position between highbrow and lowbrow has very much to do with the positioning enacted by his respective publishers, reviewers, and friends. The magazines that produced his work did so within stated political and artistic stances, and the publishers and presses with whom he finds an audience produce his work in some very well defined relations to art, culture, society, and the literary market. As Davies cannot escape from his production within the terms of his producers, we often find him understanding himself within these predetermined contexts; within the critical context created daily by every editor, critic, collector, and publisher with whom he had contact.

This chapter illustrates the perseverance of this conflict between art and the market in Davies's life and career. It first describes the community in which Davies launched his career, illustrating the close networks through which he was first disseminated as an author. I then briefly engage Davies's conception of the short story as it contrasts with the more marketable novel. I next provide a considerably longer description of Davies's early, and often frustrated, search for a publisher for his novels—the bread and butter of any professional writer—and the anxieties resulting from his limited success. As a contrast to Davies's attempts to establish himself in the mainstream market of novel writing, I then turn to his relationship with the special edition market in the twenties and thirties. The special edition market placed Davies in a considerably different discursive relationship to his identity as an author and one that shored up an artistic authenticity that was independent of financial success. In the latter sections of this chapter, I leave the twenties and thirties to explore the persistence of Davies's earliest professional anxieties in the years of his relative security in Heinemann's lists. I conclude the chapter by discussing Davies's repeated attempts to adapt his work to film, bringing the discussion back to that Elinor-Glyn-quality that so disturbed his early career.

Charles Lahr and *The New Coterie*

Davies became a writer in 1920s London when coteries and magazines abounded. Davies's coterie is an unfamiliar one in the history of modern literature. It revolved around an eccentric dealer in modern first editions named Charles Lahr (1885-1971). Lahr and his Progressive Bookshop were the hub of a large literary and radical community that included, in the first instance, poets, novelists, critics, booksellers, publishers, and in the second instance, leftist thinkers, activists, and politicians of every shade between pink and red. The Progressive Bookshop housed a surprisingly large community given that it is consistently described as little more than a sentry box capable of holding perhaps four people at a time. That Lahr and his shop were the focal point for the meeting of many individuals now well-remembered by history makes it all the more strange that we know so little about Lahr himself. He peeks out at us from other people's autobiographies, from memoirs, from letters, from the footnotes of a literary culture that has largely forgotten him.[2] Yet this is the man who printed

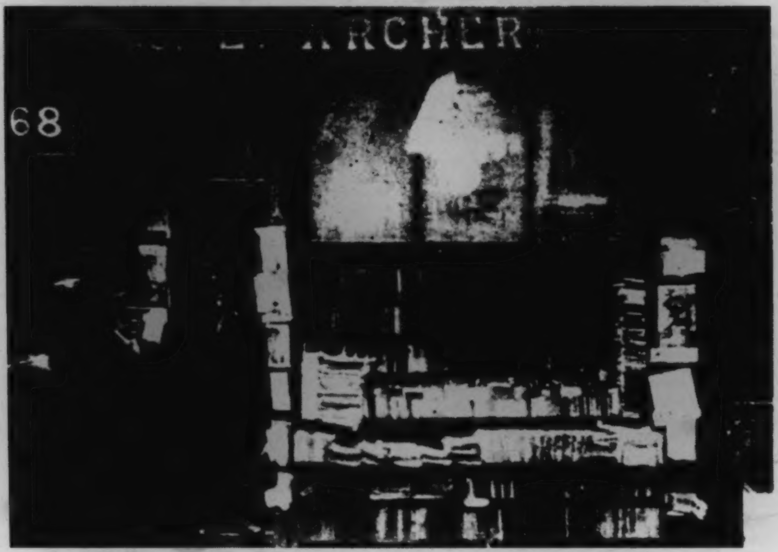


FIGURE 8: CHARLES LAHR'S PROGRESSIVE BOOKSHOP.

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[2] The only attempt at a focused treatment of his life is David Goodway's "Charles Lahr: Anarchist, bookseller, publisher." *London Magazine* June/July, 1977: 47-55. Other places where Lahr makes an appearance are, R. M. Fox's *Smoky Crusade*, London: Hogarth, 1938; Kenneth

the first unexpurgated edition of D. H. Lawrence's *Pansies* and who was offered the printing of the first authorized paperback edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* before it went to Edward Titus; and this is the man who facilitated the careers, to varying degrees, of such men as Liam O'Flaherty, T.F. Powys, James Hanley, H.E. Bates, and others. He was a friend to many "great writers" before they found their fame. As Kenneth Hopkins explains in his autobiography, *The Corruption of a Poet* (1954), "[n]ot only did Charles know everybody, but everybody knew Charles, which is quite another thing" (112). These words are another way of saying that even when Lahr was not directly involved in aiding specific individuals, he operated as a conduit through which writers, publishers, critics, and booksellers communicated; through which connections were made and careers influenced.

Invariably, those who remember Lahr's shop describe it in terms of its varied clientele. R. M. Fox remembers it as a "rendezvous for rebels and world shakers with an interest in books and ideas" (180). Rupert Croft-Cooke describes it as a "literary Rowton House" (130) to which "most writers of the years between the wars, owe…a great debt" (131). Similarly, Hopkins jokes that the habitués of Lahr's shop were called customers only as a courtesy, for it really functioned more as a club (108). And the urge to list names seems almost irresistible. Hopkins again:

> [A]part from the regulars, the shop was always being visited by people I had heard of from afar and could now marvel on at close quarters. Here for the first time I saw Anna Wickham, H. E. Bates, Rhys Davies, Ronald Duncan, Julian Symons, Walter Allen, A. J. A. Symons, Leslie Halward, C. H. Norman, Philip Lindsay, Rupert Croft-Cooke, Malachi Whittaker, Gay Taylor, Gerald Kersh, Hamish MacLaren, E. W. Martin, Oswell Blakeston, A. S. J. Tessimond, L.A. Pavey, Charles Duff, Jack McLaren, and many others. Some of these subsequently became my friends, others in the rush and clamour probably didn't even catch my name. For Charles's shop was like a mad house from about twelve to three. (112)

Among those who do not seem to have caught Hopkins' name was Davies, for Hopkins does not find mention in Davies's list of Progressive Bookshop habitués:

Hopkins's, *Corruption of a Poet*. London: James Barrie, 1954. O. F. Snellings's *Rare Books and Rarer People: Some Personal Reminiscences of 'The Trade.'* London: Werner Shaw, 1982; H. E. Bates's *Blossoming World*, London: Michael Joseph, 1971; Rupert-Croft-Cooke's *The Numbers Came*, London: Putnam, 1963; and Rhys Davies's *Print of a Hare's Foot*. London: Heinemann, 1968.

> The Progressive Bookshop became a port of call for me. There I met contributors to *The New Coterie*, the first writers I knew who did not want to do anything else. There was grim Liam O'Flaherty, Irish to his insurgent bones; the dreaming English country boy, H. E. Bates; the Jewishly ambitious Louis Golding; energetic Rupert Croft-Cooke of the roving eye; and Hugh MacDiarmid, on red excursions from one-and-only royal Scotland, and nautical James Hanley. The painter William Roberts brought his striking cover designs to the magazine, and the shop lay on the extensive beat of Nina Hamnett, another contributor, as was the Negro-obsessed Nancy Cunard. I brought a Welsh leek into this bunch. (*Print of a Hare's Foot* 111)

Two extensive lists, I know, but one needs to appreciate the reach of this tiny Holborn shop. Its influence, though perhaps not as focused, dedicated, or monumental as its contemporaries, should be considered with the same seriousness as such producers and wheel-greasers of modern culture as the Hogarth Press, Sylvia Beach, the *Little Review*, or Harold Monroe's Poetry Bookshop.

It was Charles Lahr who "discovered" Davies. Lahr's first entrance into publishing was a magazine edited by Russell Green, T.W. Earp and the Czech translator Paul Selver called *The New Coterie*. The magazine ran for six numbers from November 1925 to Autumn 1927 and included works by Liam O'Flaherty, T. F. Powys, Rupert Crofte-Cooke, D. H. Lawrence, H. E. Bates, Aldous Huxley, and many others of less renown, including (of course) the editors. Davies's first three short stories appeared in the spring, summer, and autumn numbers of 1926. Initially attracted to the magazine by its "strident William Roberts cover picture of threatening robots" (qtd. in Mitchell 80), Davies submitted three short stories about working-class South Wales written in the dark, sordid and harshly critical tone of the Carmarthen-born and London-based writer of Wales, Caradoc Evans (1878-1945), which were accepted at once by Paul Selver. He received two guineas for each story and a complete collection of Maupassant's works (Mitchell 82). Lahr also published many of the *New Coterie* writers in limited paper editions and some of Davies's work appeared in this form. Davies's first collection of short stories, *The Song of Songs and Other Stories* (1927), *Aaron* (1927), and *Tale* (1930) were all published out of the Progressive Bookshop.

Following the appearance of Davies's first three stories, Lahr's Progressive Bookshop became his frequent "port of call" (*Print of a Hare's Foot* 111) and was the node for the networks through which he launched his career. For Lahr influenced Davies's career in more subtle ways than simply publishing and printing his work. He took a special interest in Davies. He typed *The Withered Root* as Davies feverishly produced the manuscript and worked as something of an agent for Davies's subsequent novels and many of his short stories. Although Davies secured Curtis Brown as agent by 1928, his letters reveal Charles Lahr as the focal point for the transmission of his writing into print (a fact compounded by the mobile Davies's use of Lahr as his forwarding address). Lahr personally sent many of Davies's stories to magazines and publishers, sometimes without consulting Davies, as when he placed "Evelyn and Ivor" with Scholartis Press's *The Window* (RD to CL 31 Dec. 1929 SL V36 xv 22-2). And some of Davies's letters from publishers were received through Lahr rather than Curtis Brown: one letter thanks Lahr for forwarding correspondence from Putnam, and Davies decides to tell Curtis Brown to send *Count Your Blessings* there next, where the novel is finally published (RD to CL 16 Oct. 1931 SL V 36 iii 31). One also wonders if perhaps Lahr, book collector that he was, was Davies's contact for Gilbert H. Fabes, the Manager of Foyle's Rare Book Department. Foyle's published *Arfon* (1931) as a limited edition, and it was Fabes who suggested Davies to The Golden Cockerel Press, which eventually produced *Daisy Matthews and Three Other Tales* (1932). However, even if Fabes had not made the introduction, Gay Taylor, wife to the founder of The Golden Cockerel Press (and lover of A. E. Coppard) was yet one more regular of Lahr's shop (Goodway 51, Hopkins 112).

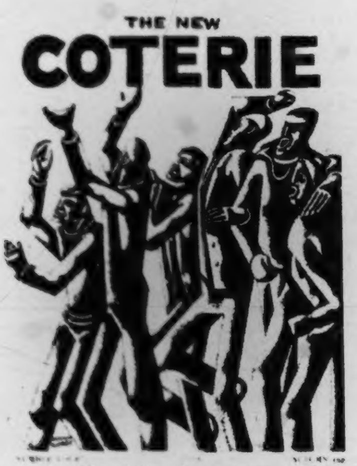

FIGURE 9: VORTICIST PAINTER WILLIAM ROBERTS'S COVER FOR THE FOURTH NUMBER OF *THE NEW COTERIE* (AUTUMN 1926).

It was also through Lahr and his bookshop that Davies made the acquaintance of P. R. Stephensen and Jack Lindsay, the editors of *The London Aphrodite* in which Davies published two of his stories. This acquaintance also led, as we have seen, to the limited edition of *A Bed of Feathers* (1929). And, again, it was Lahr who introduced Davies to D. H. Lawrence, with whom Davies sought a publisher for the cheap edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Edward Titus, the editor of *This Quarter*, eventually published the Paris edition of the outlawed and pirated novel, and so Lawrence is likely the one responsible for the publication of Davies's stories in Titus's magazine in 1929, 1930, and 1931. Lahr's shop was also where Davies made the acquaintance of both the publishers of his first novel and his first American publisher, Harcourt Brace, who published *Rings on Her Fingers* in 1931 (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii). It is not a coincidence, further, that when H. E. Bates edited *The Furnival Books*, a series of twelve signed limited editions printed by the Chiswick Press for Joiner and Steele (a.k.a. William Jackson's Ltd. and the future publishers of Davies's *Pig in a Poke*), the series included works by such *New Coterie* contributors and Lahr acquaintances as T. F. Powys, Bates, O'Flaherty, and Davies. Davies's Furnival book, *The Stars, The World and The Women*, was foreworded by O'Flaherty whose own contribution was in turn foreworded by Davies. The picture of this community is an incestuous one to say the least.[3]

Even accepting the tenuousness of some of these connections, Davies's early career was clearly dependent upon a somewhat self-sustaining community of writers, publishers, and book-dealers without whose influence and support he might very well have been forced to return to the obscurity of Blaenclydach for good. That some of these connections were also of the most casual kind should remind us that we are not always or necessarily dealing with the systematic and organized creation of a coherent body of literature, but the often incidental friendships and associations that make up a literary culture. We gain a glimpse into this friendly community of culture-producers in an amusing anecdote from the endnotes, or "Ex Cathedra," of the second number of the *London Aphrodite*. The piece begins by summarizing, and apparently enjoying, the generally negative reception of the magazine, then continues to describe a party celebrating *The London Aphrodite*'s inception:

> however, several minor reviewers welcomed the rash venture, kind friends did not hesitate to backslap, and for instance Charley Lars [sic] sold sixty copies in his sentry-box bookshop in Red Lion Street. Whereupon the Editors and Liam and Charley Lars [sic] got drunk in a cellar kept by Louis XVII, other guests being Rhys Davies, who couldn't find the cellar at all; Tommy Earp, who tried to sing "Rule, Britannia" at 3 a.m. on a beer barrel (empty), but overbalanced and broke Louis's collarbone; a calm German

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[3] Though Davies did have dealings with the bookselling side of Frederick Joiner's business prior to the Furnival series. Through Lahr, in a letter dated November 21, 1927, Davies agreed to sign books for Jackson's. Also, it seems possible that Liam O'Flaherty (also met through Lahr) suggested Davies for the Furnival Series: "It was good of O'Flaherty to mention me, but of course I am not well-known enough for that series. I should like to see O'Flaherty; is he about in the evenings?"

> scholar who had to go early; an Oxford Don who passed out; an ex-member of the I.W.W. with good intentions but a too-small stomach; a bald and cheerful Australian cartoonist; two roaring Irish bhoys covered in tap-room sawdust; two great policemen; and other Bloomsbury intellectuals. At dawn Charley Lars and the Editors took Liam home, where he irrationally began swallowing raw eggs. Then Charley vanished in a mist, and the editors sat down in the gutter, together with a pint of (salvaged) whiskey to reflect upon the Universe. (160)

The editors represent themselves and their contributors as a veritable house of misrule appropriate to their iconoclastic treatment of the mouthpieces of both "high" and "mass" culture. I particularly like the description of Lahr "vanishing in a mist" at the end of the evening for it seems a good illustration of his intangible influence in the lives and careers of many writers. He is certainly one of the forgotten cultural middlemen whose history has been squeezed out by doings of "greater men." Contrary to the picture painted by this editorial blurb, Davies's early career was not, in fact, one long party, but it was characterized by an identifiably close community, with many of the same names appearing in the tables of contents of diverse materials.

"They all cry novel": Short Stories and Novels

The life of The Progressive Bookshop was often a ragged Grub Street affair. Lahr himself was a notorious spendthrift who sacrificed the lion's share of his meager means for the young and hopeful artists around him. As a result, his shop catered to a bohemian crowd of artists whose virtue, as Bradbury and McFarlane describe bohemian virtue, was the neglect they suffered (194). Rupert Croft-Cooke recalls that the Progressive Bookshop crowd

> never expected, as writers or artists, to be anything but poor unless they hit the jackpot in their own profession. They were threadbare, ill-shod and unshaven, not in the abominably affected manner of today but because they had not the money to buy clothes and shoes, or, very often, razor blades. Naturally enough, success was unforgivable even to contributors of the New Coterie so that H. E. Bates was already looked upon with suspicion. Established writers were unmentionable except with contempt. (*The Numbers Came* 157)

Davies was just as much a victim of this paradox as any other Progressive Bookshop habitué: His first goal was professional esteem, but failing that, he would be a more legitimate artist *because* of his neglect by the established literary community.

One manifestation of this conflict is the difference that Davies perceived between short stories and novels. Davies claimed to have preferred the less marketable short story and suggests that he turned to the novel merely out of the necessity of sustaining himself. The literary market favored the novel and anyone attempting to live by his writing had to work in the longer form. For the most part, Davies wrote short stories for a different market. As mentioned earlier, in the 1920s and early 1930s, Davies's stories appeared in highbrow magazines like *The New Coterie*, *The London Aphrodite*, *The Window*, *This Quarter*, and *Transition*; or in the conservative and literate pages of *The London Mercury*, *The Evening Standard*, and *The English Review*. But whatever conflicts existed between these periodicals (and some of them were fierce ones indeed), they mostly positioned themselves against a general reader who was associated, at his worst, with the mass public of larger commercial publishers—publishers who necessarily depended upon the novel. *The New Coterie*, for instance, enjoyed a very small circulation and wrote to a fairly discrete community. Similarly, *The London Aphrodite* prided itself on its consistent unprofitability and set itself against the reader that it regarded as represented by establishment reviewers like J.C. Squire, the editor of *The London Mercury* who served, according to the *Aphrodite* editors, "the Average Cultivated Englishman of To-day" (Stephensen 86). This Englishman, they went on to claim, was a "Middle-class snob, commercially self made perhaps, still somewhat conscious of what differentiates him ("culture") from his social inferiors; and very very securely tribal in his sexual code" (Stephensen 87). Despite the *Aphrodite*'s criticisms, *The London Mercury* set itself at some considerable distance from an undiscerning mass of readers, and its editorial notes in January 1930 make very clear claims for its distinction:

> The mass production notion (America's chief contribution, at present, to common stock) has to some extent affected English publishing. There is, it is true, no diminution in the number of books published—either because they might come off or because their authors might be bestsellers later on. …Book publishing, in fact, is following in the train of newspaper publishing. The big circulations are aimed at, and they can be got by hitting the taste of the new democratic, and largely feminine, reading public. (1)

The London Mercury, as its November 1919 editorial claimed, served only "the lover of books and the practicing writer" (2).

Literary periodicals often disassociated from the average reader and the large commercial ventures that supported them. Granting Morrison's claim that magazines emerged within consumer culture, they nonetheless did not share the large market of novels and, aside from a brief boom in the years of the second

World War, it became increasingly difficult to publish short stories after the thirties. This difference no doubt allowed for many magazines' high-minded dismissal of the average reader. Davies certainly indulged in the distinction between novels and short stories, but was well aware that a writer's fortune was dependent upon the large scale production of books and that anyone who depended upon writing for his living depended upon his ability to churn out novels. Even Heinemann would likely not have produced collections of Davies's stories if he had not written novels as well, as the comparative production numbers of his novels and short story collections bear out. While his novels eventually rose to printings of 7000 to 10 000, his collections of short stories rarely surpassed 4000. The exception was *The Trip to London* (1946), which had a first printing of 10 000, but this anomaly came on the heels of the success of *The Black Venus* (1944), Davies's only novel to go into a second printing (RHAL ledgers).

So it is not surprising to hear Davies describing the short story in the introduction to his self-edited *Collected Stories of Rhys Davies* (1955) as a "luxury which only those writers who fall in love with them can afford to cultivate" (viii). Writing short stories, he claims, is a sacrifice that the artist makes to his art, for the professional writer gains very little by it. Here and elsewhere Davies dissociates with the novel and tries to invent himself as a writer of short stories. He makes the same discursive move in a biographical letter to Bucklin Moon, the editor of a 1951 Doubleday collection of Davies's stories:

> Short stories, like one's first love, have always remained sweet to me. I like the spread and space of novels, in which one can do much more secret and indirect teaching—and even preaching—and handle themes which make one feel a bit like God, but in the short story one can be, so to speak, more human. There is a fire-side, pure tale-telling quality in short stories and they can convey with much more success than the novel the ancient or primitive, the intrinsic flavour of a race or people. (RD to BM 31 May 1950 HRHRC)

Leaving aside, for the moment, Davies's privileging of race and place in this comparison, it is clear that the short story is for him a more "pure" form of writing that must be set aside from time to time for the more lucrative novel.

Ironically, Heinemann seems to have come to the conclusion that the best way to advertise Davies's novels was through the artistic legitimacy of their author's short stories. It is with a strange sense of dislocation that one reads the dust-jackets of his later novels to discover that "Rhys Davies is a first-class writer and every short story in this book is a novel in itself" (back flap, *Nobody Answered the Bell*). It would seem that eventually Davies was sold as a short story writer, perhaps confirming a recent Heinemann historian, John St. John's, interpretation that Davies's books, "while not *exactly* poor sellers", were kept in Heinemann's lists "largely because he wrote so well" (361 italics added). St. John confirms that Davies is "best remembered for his short stories…[that] skillfully avoided the slickness of the mechanical magazine story" (361). Tellingly, these last words of St. John's are lifted from a review printed on the dust jackets of several of Davies's novels. The review was written by C. Day Lewis and goes on to claim that Davies is "not to be imitated by the mass-fiction factories" (back flap *The Perishable Quality*). Heinemann's marketers clearly tried to cash in on Davies's artistic credentials and, in case I am accused of cynicism, I would ask why these novels that so clearly praise Davies as a short story writer were never out-printed by the short story collections, the last of which, *The Chosen One and Other Stories* (1966), fell to an all-time low of 2000 (RHAL ledgers).

Needless to say, when Davies was a young writer trying to establish himself as a professional of some standing, the novel offered his only route to financial security and the short story, whatever it provided in the way of artistic distinction, was not, as he explained in 1928 to poet and fellow *New Coterie* contributor, Philip Henderson, going to buy him any sausages:

> So you understand, don't you? The only thing to do, it seems to me, is to write a novel as quickly as possible and get an advance when completed. Publishers are interested in young writers. But not in poetry. They all cry novel. Chatto's, Gollancz, Capes, and Putnams have all written to me. But what's the good when I've got nothing to show them? Work, work—I've got to work. But it's like facing an unpleasant operation to think of sitting down before a pad of paper.
>
> All I can say is get a couple of decently written novels done and you'll soon get enough to buy yourself a couple of sausages for dinner for at least a year. (RD to PH 16 Sept. 1928 NLW MS 22003E #31)

Accordingly, when Davies approached Chatto & Windus with a collection of short stories, the firm wrote back advising that they might consider a volume of short stories when he has "had one or two more novels out" (RD to CL 1928 SL V 36 iii). Similarly, when in the late thirties Davies tried his hand at a biography of his childhood hero, Jorgen Jorgensen,[4] he had great difficulty in getting the book published. After Longman's rejected it with "the usual bleak comment about [its]…limited appeal", Davies regarded the venture as "a lesson not to wander from the safe path of novels" (RD to RM undated NLW MS 20897 E).

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[4] The resulting book is *Sea Urchin: Adventures of Jorgen Jorgensen*. London: Duckworth, 1940.

"The dreary struggle": Finding a Publisher

So while the short story's unmarketability may have granted it an artistic legitimacy that appealed to Davies, it was the novel that determined the path of his career, and it is through his attempts to publish his novels that we will explore his dependence upon the market. In this next section, I demonstrate both the financial precariousness of Davies's career and his reactionary claims to artistic indifference.

Davies published five novels before securing himself in Heinemann's lists: *The Withered Root* (1928), *Rings on her Fingers* (1930), *The Red Hills* (1932), *Count Your Blessings* (1932), and *Honey and Bread* (1935). The last three of these were published by Putnam (along with the 1933 collection of short stories, *Love Provoked*), and, therefore, constitute some of the security that Davies sought. His position with Putnam, though young, was stable, and Davies left Putnam voluntarily when Heinemann editor, A. Dwye Evans, wooed him to Heinemann's over lunch in 1935 (Callard 86). However, these Putnam books belong to the insecure period of Davies's career for they did the rounds with a number of other publishers before finding their home. Davies comes to Putnam quite unexpectedly after failing to find a home with Gollancz, Faber, Jonathon Cape, and Chatto & Windus; after having to consider some much smaller ventures with shakier presses; and after having to resort for a second time to the unprofitable publishers of *The Withered Root*. When we follow Davies through his struggle to place himself with a mainstream commercial publisher, we see the anxieties informing his relationship to the market. These anxieties defined his perception of his career and became a major influence in his writing.

Davies's first two novels were published with a small fledgling firm plagued with financial difficulty. Technically, there were two publishers, Robert Holden and Harold Shaylor, but when Holden went bankrupt, Shaylor picked up the business retaining Holden's address, lists and contracts. Davies's dealings with these two publishers are very much the hagglings of commercial men, and Davies speaks very naturally in the voice of the professional writer who cannot afford to ignore the power of money and publicity. Davies was ultimately displeased with both publishers, and only published *Rings on her Fingers* with Shaylor after failing to secure an alternative deal. Aside from an initial advance, Davies seems to have made little, if any, profit from his first two novels. In a letter to H. E. Bates, Davies explained that he was "disgusted with Holden's" (RD to HEB 11 Jan. 1928 HRHRC). They had not paid him the £30 due to him on the day of *The Withered Root*'s publication, they had ignored his requests for an explanation, and Davies tells Bates that he hopes that Holden's breach of contract will free him from his obligation of submitting his second novel to him.

When Shaylor took over Holden's business, Davies was at first quite willing to continue his contract. We learn from a letter to Lahr that Shaylor continued to publish *The Withered Root* (though he replaced Holden's William Roberts dust-jacket), and was interested in seeing some of Davies's short stories for a possible limited edition. Davies happily asked Lahr to send a copy of *The Song of Songs* (RD to CL 1928 SL V 36 iii). It becomes very clear, however, that Davies eventually resisted continuing with Shaylor as his publisher. He explained to Lahr that he was going to try once again to release himself from his contract as he was sure that Shaylor was "not justified in saying he'[d] got a right to [Davies's] work" (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii). In response, Shaylor appears to have nearly blackmailed the financially precarious Davies into another book deal. He refused to pay Davies royalties owing on *The Withered Root* account claiming that, as the original publishers had gone into liquidation, he was not legally bound to do so (RD to CL undated SL V36 iii). However, he went on to inform Davies that, if Davies was willing to publish his next book with Shaylor, he would pass on the royalties owing on *The Withered Root* to the new deal (RD to CL undated SL V36 iii). Essentially, Shaylor withheld royalties until Davies agreed to let Shaylor publish his next novel. But Davies was far too unhappy with Shaylor as a businessman and did not trust his handling of Davies's career. Of course, Davies was eventually forced to hand over his next novel, *Rings on Her Fingers*, to Shaylor, but even then he complained that Shaylor had not done nearly enough to promote this second novel. He claimed that it had been neither reviewed in *The Times Literary Supplement*, nor advertised in *The Observer* and elsewhere (RD to CL 23 July 1930 SL V36 iii 28-2). Clearly, Davies was deeply engaged in the business of fiction from the start.

Davies spent a great deal of energy in negotiating the finances of writing and was nowhere near being the sublime artist working in transcendent isolation. However, his crass attention to matters of payment and advertising did not stop him from recasting his displeasure with Shaylor in terms that are only secondarily financial. In a letter to Gilbert Fabes, the manager of Foyle's Rare Book Department, Davies explained: "The disgusting business over the limited edition of 'Rings on Her Fingers' was not unexpected. That man Shaylor is a fool and a scoundrel. He doesn't know how to handle books—books as literature. He ought to be in the rubber goods trade, though he'd be too ignorant to handle these attempts properly" (RD to GF 26 Oct. 1931 HRHRC). Not only does Davies's euphemistic reference to contraceptives represents a kind of Lawrentian displeasure for the mechanization of life (and art), but the terms of his condemnation of Shaylor are not financial ones. He was writing to a rare book collector whose interest in the book as an art-object of almost sacred value place Davies's words in a very specific discursive context. This is the Fabes who writes in his *Modern First Editions: Points and Values* (1932) that "book collecting in all of its departments will remain with us, as it has done for several years, and the values of books either because of their rarity, appeal, or beauty, rather than by their commercial worth, will always be a definite factor" (xv). Further, Fabes included two of Davies's books—The Mandrake Press *A Bed of Feathers* (1929), and Joiner and Steele's *Pig in a Poke* (1931)—in *Modern First Editions*, thereby electing Davies to what Fabes calls the "charmed and magical title 'Collected Author'" (xvi). Therefore, when Davies wrote to this connoisseur of books making a distinction between books as literature and books as trade commodity and expressed a desire to be out of Shaylor's crude mercantile hands, he positioned himself as writer of a certain kind. Davies made a claim for his work to be treated as art; as something that had a value beyond the market rationale. On the surface, this desire conflicted with Davies's need for publicity and adequate payment, but was in fact the direct result of the failure implied by having to resort to Shaylor for publication. Davies still has the stink of failure about him, so he can't help but spritz himself with some aesthetic rosewater.

Following the publication of *The Withered Root* (1927), Davies wrote his next three novels more or less simultaneously. He was unhappy with the poor sales of *The Withered Root*. It sold 3000 copies in the States and even fewer in England. It lost money for its American publisher, Holt, presumably because "the subject matter [was] not popular" (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii). As a result, Davies determined to "make [his] next novel more popular in theme" to avoid a "reputation of being unsaleable" (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii). The next three novels, one must assume, are the fruits of that attempt. *Count Your Blessings* (1932) was started first and published second by Putnam; *Rings on Her Fingers* (1930), as we have seen, was produced by the publishers of *The Withered Root*; and *The Red Hills* (1933) followed on the heels of *Count your Blessings* in Putnam's lists.[5] *Rings on Her Fingers* and *The Red Hills* were completed at much the same time and did the run of the publishers together. As these three novels made their rounds, Davies positioned himself in relation to the various publishers that considered and rejected him. At the very least, Davies wanted nothing more than to escape the relative obscurity of such small ventures as Holden, Shaylor and, as we see in this letter to Lahr, the young and short-lived Scholartis Press:

> I don't know about the Scholartis Press idea. I don't want my books to be here, there and everywhere. It's a good firm, I know, but of course I'd get more publicity if I had a vol. published by say, Gollancz or Cape. My second novel won't get much from Brentano's.[6] And it's rather important I get some now. "The Withered Root" only got me known in a small circle and it would be the same with the Press, good as it is. On the other hand, I

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[5] *The Red Hills* was originally titled "Virginia" after one of the novel's two protagonists and appears as such in most of the letters that refer to it.

[6] Brentano's is Holden/Shaylor. It shares the same Gower Street address, and Davies sends material to Shaylor there.

> don't want to miss any chances—now that I've got my living to earn by it.
> Ach! It's a dreary struggle. Still, I'm happier now than I was. (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii 12-3)

This is the clear and unambiguous voice of Davies the professional writer, weighing the odds of holding out for a more reputable publisher against hedging his bets with a sure thing that will keep a roof over his head. Scholartis Press (1927-1931)—which had close ties to Jack Lindsay and the Franfrolico Press, and whose name implied both the "scholarly" and the "artistic"—was at this time a very new press heading toward bankruptcy in the Depression (Randall 283-284). At this early stage in his career, Davies could not afford to be too committed to his high-minded self-image as an artist.

With three novels completed and making their run of the publishers at roughly the same time, we can trace a pretty clear picture of Davies's relationship to the commercial publishers and his growing disillusionment and frustration as he tried to establish himself. First, Chatto and Windus rejected *Rings on Her Fingers*, and, following that, both Victor Gollancz and Jonathan Cape rejected *Rings on Her Fingers* and *The Red Hills*. Eventually Davies decided to let *Rings on Her Fingers* go to Harold Shaylor. We can be reasonably certain that these were the only publishers other than the Mandrake Press and Putnam's to consider these books. An undated letter to Lahr, which can be placed contextually in the latter half of 1929, when *Rings on Her Fingers* and *The Red Hills* are with Cape, explains that the manuscripts that are now with the Mandrake Press have "only been tried on three publishers" (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii). As *Rings on Her Fingers* was published by Shaylor by the middle of 1930, and given the months it generally took for a publisher to reject a book, Davies's manuscripts likely did not go to anybody other than Chatto's, Gollancz and Cape before Putnam published *Count Your Blessings* and *The Red Hills* in 1931 and 1932 respectively.

Naturally, Davies's rejection by Chatto and Windus, Gollancz and Cape instilled in him something of an iconoclastic dislike of these commercial arbiters of literary production. When Davies tried his novel with Chatto's, they were already publishing Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, Richard Aldington, H. G. Wells, and, closest to Davies, the "Welshy" T. F. Powys (Schneller 110-117). Not only had Davies shared a place between *The New Coterie* covers with both Huxley and Powys, but he was personally acquainted with both authors; Huxley he met through Lawrence, and Powys he met through Lahr. Perhaps Davies saw no reason why such associations should not continue into the lists of Chatto and Windus. Of course, Curtis Brown may have had more to do with the selection of Chatto and Windus than Davies, but Davies was no less invested in the selection. He knew what it meant to be rejected by a publisher and was able to make comparisons between himself and writers already in a publisher's lists.

Even though Chatto and Windus was only the first major commercial publisher to reject Davies, he seems to have taken this rejection most bitterly. He is almost incredulous when he thinks "of all the rubbish that gets published," and finally declaims that "Chatto's are too bloody English for [him]" (RD to CL undated SL V36 xv 33-2). When Davies dismisses Chatto's as "too bloody English" we are seeing the strong influence that Lawrence's perception of the English literary market had upon Davies. As a result of this influence and Chatto's rejection of *Rings on Her Fingers*, Davies refused to send the passionate Lawrentian novel, *The Red Hills*, to the firm, dismissing them as "too timid" and predicting that there would be "more stars than words if they printed anything of [his]" (RD to CL undated SL V36 xv 21-2). Davies here chose to see his rejection by Chatto and Windus as a backhanded validation of the kind of writer he supposed himself to be; young, courageous, sensual, unconventional and progressive. But again, one suspects that he protests too much.

It is more than just tempting to imagine that it was with a sense of revolt against the traditional and long-established Chatto and Windus that Davies turned to the very young (established in 1928), and politically inflammatory Victor Gollancz. Gollancz revolutionized the ways in which books were produced and promoted, and was a new and strong presence in the English literary market. He introduced large splash-page advertising, developed (with the expert assistance of Stanley Morison) bold and eye-catching dust-jackets, and experimented with new markets and new forms of book production. Generally speaking, Gollancz sought to create and serve a larger reading public than had hitherto been targeted by publishers. His vision was a far cry from Chatto and Windus's who, just two years before Gollancz began business, employed Frank Swinnerton as their literary advisor; a Swinnerton who would eventually mourn for the bygone nineteenth-century days when

> every publisher's office was his castle, where he sat in mighty solitude waiting for the trade to come to him, and where—however parlous the state of publishing—his bills were comparatively small, his pace unpressed, and his financial ambitions modest. A book was still "the precarious life-blood of a master spirit" and its advent a thrilling promise of delight. (*The Bookman's London* 78)

For Swinnerton, the publishing industry of 1950—and he speaks of a state of affairs that began to form early in the century—was characterized by a "mass production and absorption of stunt books" which had "reduced current literature to a chatter" (*The Bookman's London* 78). Chatto and Windus was an old and respected firm grounded, if Swinnerton's recollections are any indication, in a discourse of artistic idealism. They were a far cry from Gollancz's revolutionary zeal.

How much Gollancz's commitment to popularizing literature and serving new reading publics was an exploitation of a market and how much a liberal obligation to a popular front is not entirely clear. As a business venture, the house was very successful, but Gollancz certainly regarded his efforts as politically and socially motivated. The Mundanus series, for instance, was conceived to produce good modern novels cheaply to reach a wider audience. The paper-covered novels sold for 3 shillings each—much less than the typical 7s 6d—and sold very well (the first three novels sold 14,000, 20,000, and 10,000, copies). According to the company's advertisement, this project was "both socially desirable and likely to be commercially profitable" (Hodges 50). As it turned out, the series was not profitable. Reviews were lukewarm and the market for cheap novels was flooded when the Penguin series began reproducing cheap editions of already established novels in 1935.

Gollancz did not continue with the "socially desirable" series despite its unprofitability, so there are limits to his social conscience; however, it is nonetheless clear that he cultivated a strong political stance in his publishing, as is evident in his creation of the Left Book Club, his publication of *The Tribune* and his commitment to publishing political works of non-fiction. All in all, Gollancz was commercially successful, unconventional, Leftist, and popular. So, when Gollancz rejected Davies's novels, we may understand that rejection within certain clearly stated political terms. Especially when Gollancz responds as explicitly as he did: "I feel that the man has a future: but I don't find in there the touch of genius which would tempt me to publish a good deal which, though perfectly bona fide, would certainly make an appeal to the sort of public which I don't want to cultivate" (qtd in RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii 27-3). The "sort of public" that Gollancz refers to can only be something too far from what he will refer to in his Left Book Club introduction to Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) as literature that creates a "mass basis without which a genuine people's front is impossible" (x). Despite the Welsh working-class themes appearing in both *The Red Hills* and *Rings on Her Fingers*, Gollancz is unmoved by Davies's novels. This dislike is likely due to the fact that Davies's novels have far more to do with psychology and passion than they do with the mobilization of the working classes. Davies's novels were a far cry, for instance, from the work of his fellow-Welshman, B. L. Coombes, the life-long miner and writer whose autobiography, *These Poor Hands*, was a best selling Left Book Club book in 1939.

So, Davies did not find a home in Gollancz's mass-marketed and political lists any more than he did with the respectable Chatto and Windus, and seems to have felt his displacement very strongly. Tellingly, he responds to his rejection by Gollancz within the context of his recent characterization in the *New Age* review of *A Bed of Feathers*, but not before taking a jab at the "sorts of public" he suggests Gollancz produces: "That last is a nasty smack in the mouth of the small but select public that seems to get pleasure out of my books! Snubbed by Mr. Gollancz, the publisher of Sarah Salt and Isadora Duncan. Dear, Dear! This is what comes of being the Elinor Glyn of the highbrows" (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii 27-3). Isadora Duncan's *My Life*, an early bestseller for Gollancz, was a shocking and potentially libelous book depicting Duncan's life and her relationships with her lovers. It was immensely popular, was reprinted many times, and was made into a popular film, *The Loves of Isadora* (1968). Similarly, Sarah Salt's books bear titles like *Sense and Sensuality* and contain passages of tawdry purple prose, like these ones from *Joy is My Name* (1928):

> His hands dropped. He was very close now. Their lips were almost touching. Trembling, she awaited the kiss. …He gripped her with his arms. She made a feeble attempt to escape. But he knew—he knew! Warm waves of fear and joy flowed over her. His kisses left her powerless. Now with delicate knowledge his hands caressed her. She pulled away with wide, submissive eyes. (55-57)

This is the kind of titillating writing that the *New Age* reviewer of *A Bed of Feathers* accused Davies of, making his point in the same manner in which I have dismissed Salt; with a quotation: "a *strained* and *baffled* look would come into her *searching* eyes, and she would cross her *pressing* arms over her body, a *half-strangled* moan escaping her *distended* lips" (S. 143 reviewer's italics). As if these connections weren't enough, one of Salt's characters in *Joy is My Name* is described as "sitting on the front at Bournemouth reading Elinor Glyn and rotting in the sun" (129). Salt, it seems, was as anxious as Davies to distance herself from popular novels. So, when Davies responds to his rejection by Gollancz, he is no doubt poking fun at the public cultivated by Duncan's racy book and Salt's romances; and when Davies laments at being "the Elinor Glyn of the highbrows" he is lamenting that he does not seem to have a place as popular, political or "artistic."

Following his rejection by Gollancz, Davies was losing faith. When *The Red Hills* and *Rings on her Fingers* were with Jonathan Cape, he was more and more convinced that he was going to get "a reputation for being unsaleable" after all: "Curtis Brown have now sent them to Cape…but I think now this is a waste of time. I think Cape is the least likely to handle 'Virginia'—and, after reading 'Virginia', they're not likely to bother with 'Rings'. I'm sure now none of the ordinary commercial publishers will wish me" (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii 27-3). As time wore on and Davies was "rapidly being mummified" (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii 26) in Blaenclydach, his frustration grew: "Heard nothing from Cape yet. What a time! I'm getting perfectly sick of this waiting. Too late now, in any case, to get one out this autumn. Blast all publishers and blast literature—I do wish I could go to sleep and wake up with them and it gone cleanly out of my consciousness" (RD to CL undated SL V 36 iii 26). Davies is no more optimistic after the publication of *Rings on Her Fingers*, as is evident in his commiseration with Rupert Croft-Cooke: "You are not more depressed than I am. I only bear up by work, work and work. Blast the public and critics. You got to keep on slamming at 'em until they accept your point of view. I don't care a damn for any of them" (RD to RCC undated 1930? HRHRC). Like many writers', Davies's career began in string of rejections. As we can see from these letters, this rejection grew to an antagonism between himself and literary institutions. These diatribes are not simply the fleeting rage of the frustrated author, but the earliest expressions of a defining tension between the author and the seemingly allied forces of publisher, critic, and public.

Small Presses and Special Editions

One of the ways in which Davies "blasted" the public and the critics was to exploit alternative means of publication. After Chatto and Windus, Gollancz and Cape had rejected Davies, he was forced to turn away from the ordinary commercial publishers and let Shaylor publish his second novel, *Rings on Her Fingers*. But Shaylor was Davies's second choice. While he was still waiting expectantly for Cape's rejection, Davies offered *The Red Hills* and *Rings on Her Fingers* to Stephensen's Mandrake Press, which had by this time already published *A Bed of Feathers*. As mentioned earlier, the Mandrake grew out of The Franfrolico Press, established in 1926 by Jack Lindsay and P.R. Stephensen as the vehicle for editing and printing *The London Aphrodite*, which was one of Davies's earliest forums. When Pino Orioli showed Lindsay some of D. H. Lawrence's paintings, Lindsay toyed with the idea of producing an edition of them. Orioli wrote to Lawrence informing him of the possibility of the book, and when Stephensen arrived in France, it was Davies who introduced him to Lawrence. Ultimately Lindsay chose not to venture into any endeavor that could be associated with the *Lady Chatterley* affair, so Stephensen, who likely wanted to capitalize on the success of the special edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* produced the book in collaboration with a prosperous Bookseller, Edward Goldsten (1892-1953) and The Mandrake Press was born behind the dubious aegis of Lawrence's reputation (Lindsay 2-3). R. P. Carr speculates that Stephensen's subsequent publication of Davies's *London Aphrodite* story "A Bed of Feathers" in a Mandrake edition could have been influenced by his gratitude for Davies's role in introducing Stephensen to Lawrence (17).

The Mandrake was the beginning of Davies's relationship with the special edition market, which was a different market again from both the magazine market and the mainstream commercial market of novels. When Davies turned away from the commercial publishers, he also turned away from his desire to sell himself as a popular writer. Instead, he very easily adopted the rhetoric of the non-commercial artist. This anti-market perspective was strongly influenced by his friendship with D. H. Lawrence who, as John Worthen discusses in "D.H. Lawrence and the 'Expensive Edition Business,'" was bitter about the *Lady Chatterley* affair, and becoming increasingly dismissive of the large commercial publishers. While in Nice, before the "dreary struggle" of finding a publisher had begun, Davies explained to Lahr that Lawrence "is sick of the ordinary publishers. It's not a bad idea to do a book as he's done 'Lady C.' I might try it some day and have it printed in Paris at my own expense" (RD to CL 1928 SL V 36 xv). Knowing the precariousness of Davies's future financial state, it is amusing to see him imagining that he would ever have the resources to produce anything "at his own expense." But the real point of interest here is the juxtaposition of established commercial publishers with Lawrence's independent production of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as an expensive edition.

Worthen describes Lawrence in the years of his acquaintanceship with Davies, as taking advantage of a boom in limited editions despite his prior opinion of them as "a bit of a swindle" (qtd. in Worthen 117). Much of this conflict arose out of the difficulty of finding a publisher for *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and the need to exploit alternative modes of production. The initial expensive edition was priced beyond the means of most of the reading public (first £2, and then £4). The appearance of pirated editions then drove Lawrence to find a publisher willing to produce a cheap edition, which, by the end of 1930 (after Lawrence's death) brought in royalties on 30,000 copies (Worthen 121). So Lawrence was closely engaged in the discursive implications of his means of literary production when Davies knew (and idolized) him. As Davies himself was only just launching himself into his own career, he naturally aligned himself with Lawrence's conflict.

Finding himself rejected by Chatto's, Gollancz, and, if the pattern continued, Cape as well, Davies, under the influence of Lawrence, turned to the limited editions of small publishers to get his writing into print. He writes to Lahr that Lawrence "thinks that the 'Mandrake' would serve [Davies's] purpose at the moment—for [Davies's] novels. Says the 'proper' public of the big publishing houses is dead where men like [Lawrence] and [Davies] are concerned. But on the other hand [Lawrence] doesn't think the 'Mandrake' will have a long run" (RD to CL 2 Sept.1929 SL V36 xv 18-2). What does Lawrence/Davies mean by "men like he and [himself,]" and how does he conceive his relation to the "'proper' public"? Of course, one can only take this statement in the self-righteous tone in which it is intended: Both Lawrence, and, by association, Davies, are supposedly beyond the taste of the mass-consuming (and likely "too Englishly" respectable) audience. Both writers, one can assume, challenge and frighten the respectable reading audiences too much. Davies recalls Lawrence's revolutionary tone in *Print of a Hare's Foot.* His Lawrence rants, "Kick,…kick all the time, make them feel you know what they are. Because you *do* know, you're intelligent enough. The young know, they *know*, and yet they let be. It drives me to despair when I see them holding back, letting be. Because your chance is now; the world is all wobbling and wants a new direction" (131). One wonders how the publication of special editions, running to about 500 copies each, would send the world in a new direction, but it is clearly bound up in a frustration with mainstream literary circles.

In truth, both Davies and Lawrence turned to special editions out of economic necessity rather than a high-minded rejection of commercial publishing: Lawrence, because no one else would touch *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and Davies, because no one else would touch any novel he wrote. Davies's financial straits are evident throughout his letters: He continually sold manuscripts of his novels to book dealers; he often had difficulty paying his typist; and he importuned publishers for advances. For instance, Davies was spending the money he earned from his Golden Cockerel Press book, *Daisy Matthews and Three Other Tales*, long before the book had been produced. He wrote to the press' president, Robert Gibbings, for an advance, explaining that he was "rather depending on these stories at [that] particular period, and [he] earns [his] living at [his] writing" (RD to RG 24 Apr. 1932 HRHRC). About two weeks later, he asked for another advance "as [he was] particularly broke" at that time (RD to RG 9 May 1932 HRHRC). So the special edition, whatever else it offered in the way of cultural capital, was also simply a way to make ends meet. In a letter asking G. H. Wells to review *The Skull*, Davies lamented the decline in good magazines and the horrible state of affairs for publishing short stories, and is grateful for the sustenance provided by limited editions: "Too awful that England can't keep a decent short story magazine going. The market gets more limited every year: I never know what to do with my stories (and that's where an occasional limited edition comes in useful)" (RD to GHW 13 July 1936 HRHRC).

This economic imperative, however, did not stop Davies from indulging, from time to time, in quite a nobler vision of the special edition market. At the same time that Davies was trying to establish himself with a strong commercial publisher, he was also taking advantage of a number of smaller presses that placed him in a significantly different discursive relationship to his writing than did the larger publishers. Between 1929 and 1935 Davies had seven books published as expensive special editions, ranging in price from 10s 6d to 25s, most often for a single short story: *A Bed of Feathers: A Dramatic Story of Love in the Welsh Coalfields* (1929) was published by the Mandrake Press; *The Stars, The World and the Women* (1930) was published in a series of special editions called the Furnival Books by Jackson; *A Woman* (1931) was published by Bronze Snail Press; *Arfon* (1931) was published by W. and G. Foyle; *Daisy Matthews and Three other Tales* (1932) was published by the Golden Cockerel Press; *One of Norah's Early Days* (1935) was published by Grayson and Grayson; and *The Skull* (1936) was published by Tintern Press. There were also several other limited editions printed by Charles Lahr, but these were paper-bound 8vo or pamphlets and their prices did not approach those of the special editions. All of Davies's special edition titles were published in the 1920s and 1930s, and we may suspect that Davies no longer depended upon special editions once he had established himself with Heinemann; however, this change is more likely due to the decline in the special edition market during the Depression. Davies never turned down opportunities for publication and profit and, if special editions had remained an option, he likely would have availed himself of them.

Financial needs notwithstanding, the special edition market placed Davies outside the larger marketplace of the established publishing industry. Although at this time Davies very much wanted the comfort of an established publisher for his work, this did not stop him in the meantime from enjoying the artistic legitimation that his forced removal from the mass-market enabled, and he often adopted the role of the self-righteous artist resisting the alienating removal of the craftsman from his craft. In the special edition, the agent and commercial publisher have been removed, and nothing now comes between the writer and the printers who will convey the craft to its proper appreciative public. In an undated[7] manuscript of an article on book collecting entitled "The Nose," Davies speaks of special editions in very high (and elitist) terms: "In a world where the cinema, the two-penny lending library, tinned music and hysterical newspapers are becoming ever more popular, it is a relief to come across a leisurely designed book produced in the tradition, more or less, in the illuminated manuscripts[8] of old" ("The Nose" HRHRC 1-2). Davies here regards the special edition as an escape from the degradations of a mass market. Even here, the professional author slips through, however, when Davies acknowledges that the collection of limited editions is "entirely a business proposition" in as far as we "all live by profit" ("The Nose" HRHRC 2), and praises book collectors for they each do as much for the author as one hundred lending-library borrowers ("The Nose" HRHRC 2). For the most part, however, Davies conceives of the special edition as functioning in a realm beyond the taste of the popular consumption of newspapers, popular music, lending libraries, and the cinema, conferring upon their authors their proper dues as artists.

And this view is not Davies's alone. The Golden Cockerel Press, for instance, which published a special edition of four of Davies's stories, *Daisy Matthews and Three Other Tales* (1932), was established, as they claim in their first prospectus, in the belief of "the inadequacy of the commercial system of publishing…as the vehicle of the intelligent and artistic expression of the time"

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[7] This article could have been written for Gilbert Fabes in 1935. Davies wrote to Fabes agreeing to contribute to Fabes's "Symposium": "Shall be glad to make a contribution to the Symposium. Hope to be able to cast some light on book-collecting" (RD to GF Oct 21, 1935 HRHRC).

[8] I am not certain of this word. In the letter it looked like "mussels." But as that does not make sense, I thought it might have been an abbreviated spelling of "manuscripts," which would make much more sense in the context of the sentence.

(Chute 57). They contend that they constitute a "more responsible intermediary between author and public" (Chute 57) that eliminates "the profit-making middlemen and directorate which in the commercial system come between author and working printer, the inventor of the book and its maker" (Chute 58). This more intimate mode of production is more amenable to the creation of art than the production of a mass reading commodity, for presses like the Golden Cockerel Press does not depend upon "the conditions of commercial publishing [which] oblige the commercial publisher to rely more and more on large issues for his success, and, consequently, to take popular appeal instead of artistic integrity for his criterion" (Chute 57). As such, the Golden Cockerel Press bases its method of distribution upon "Reputation rather than Publicity" (Chute 58), believing that a good piece of work has its "natural public" (Chute 58). On the whole, their mission is to "emancipate" the "writer of un-'popular' stuff…from commercial publishing" (Chute 59-60).

Appropriately, whereas Davies was disappointed in Shaylor's neglect in advertising *Rings on Her Fingers*, promotion and advertisement did not seem to apply to his special editions and he seemed to regard his writing for special editions and book collecting as somehow independent of the market and closer to the artist's isolation with his work. When Gilbert Fabes produced the special edition of *Arfon* (1931) at 12s 6d for Foyle's, Davies was ambivalent about the chore of promoting the book, especially as regarded securing reviews:

> As for review copies, will you send one to R. L. Megroz Esq, c/o "The New Leader." And what about the "Western Mail" of Cardiff? Perhaps you could afford to put an advt. of it there? I can't think of any reviewers at the moment—and in any case I hate touting for reviews. I really ought to be in London to advertise it a bit, but can't afford it just now. However, I'll try to think of some people who might be interested. (RD to GF 16 Mar. 1931 HRHRC)

Davies was rather dismissive of the fate of his book and almost resentful of having to curry reviews. Similarly, four years later, again writing to Gilbert Fabes, Davies was even more determined to decommodify himself and establish his artistic independence:

> I'm rather unhappy about offering signed copies of the novel as an inducement to people to take it. You know I don't mind signing copies for people who are interested in my work and have come to it in the natural course of their reading—and who express a wish to have a copy or two signed. I believe I've signed several books thus (and as a result of your introduction, probably). But, honestly, I rather shrink from offering such personal inducements to buy as

> signing copies (A special limited edition is a different matter). I do believe a book should stand on its own two feet—on the merit of its contents. I'm always against prefaces and introductions by people other than the author of the book too, for the same reason.
>
> I shall be happy to sign some copies for people who have bought the book and who may be interested in having it inscribed. (RD to GF 14 Jan. 1935 HRHRC)

Again, I think that it is very important that we accept Davies's awareness of his respondent's relationship to the book industry. As the Manager of Foyle's Rare Book Department, Fabes cultivated a special relationship to the art-value of the book. His occupation and views placed Davies in a discursive context that allowed him to adopt a specialized cultural stance that magnified and idealized his role as an artist and the legitimacy of his work as art. By 1935, Davies had twice had the prestige of "collected author" conferred upon him: Once by Fabes himself in *Modern First Editions: Points and Values* (1932); and again by John Gawsworth's *Ten Contemporaries: Notes Toward Their Definitive Bibliography* (1931). It is partly from this position that Davies responded to Fabes's request and again Davies made the very subtle distinctions that illustrate his ambivalent and conflicted relationship to his various means of production. There was a difference, it seems, between signing a special edition as part of the complete production of the art-book, and signing novels (produced on a much larger scale) to help move them from the shelves of the book shop. Whereas signing special editions was part of the leisurely production of an artist's work for those who cultivate an appreciation for fine things and fine art, signing his novels "as an inducement" for sales debased the coinage of Davies's cultural capital. Davies was offended by Fabes's suggestion, as though Fabes had threatened the value of Davies's identity as an artist by reducing his signature to the currency of mass production.

Of course, Davies was not unequivocal about the special edition. The context in which he wrote to a book collector or in which he wrote an essay on book collecting, was not the context in which he wrote to a *TLS* reviewer. When writing to G. H. Wells of his Golden Cockerel Press special edition, Davies is dismissive: "I've just had a book of four stories taken by the Golden Cockerel Press: a limited edition at 21s. I become more expensive every year! A pity my own financial state doesn't increase accordingly" (RD to GHW 9 May 1932 HRHRC). Similarly, when he wrote Wells to "tout" for a review of *The Skull* (1936), he admitted to the pomp of such ventures: "He's [Vincent Stuart] made rather a handsome job of the book, though of course from our 'literary' point of view a short-story all decked up and costing 25/- seems unnecessary, I suppose something can be said for the labour of a genuine craftsman, as this young man seems to be" (RD to GHW 13 July 1936 HRHRC). Suddenly, when talking to Wells from this purely "literary" point of view—from the discourse of criticism rather than of collecting—the elaborate production of a limited edition is an unnecessary intervention between the writer's work and its consumption. In keeping with this "literary" point of view, when Wells wrote his review of the book, he contrasted Davies's "literary" effort with the physical opulence of its production by stating that "Mr. Rhys Davies's fourteen-page story…stands up passably well to the stringent test of such a solitary state" of production ("Furnival Books" 268). Wells suggests that the story was hampered by the slow transmission and limited production of the book; as though the last thing Davies needed, as a writer or an artist, was to be "solitary."

This tension between the impracticality and aesthetic value of the special edition is also worked out in the advertisement and reception of Davies's "cheapest" special edition, his Furnival Book, *The Stars, The World, and the Women* (1930). William Jackson advertised the series with the claim that "they will enable the man with a slender purse to possess a set of books that will include work by some of the best short-story writers and artists of the day and, at the same time, be finely printed and bound" (qtd in "Furnival Books" 268). It claimed, therefore, that it wished to bring the more specialized book to a wider reading public: to bridge the gap between the special edition market and the mass market despite the fact that the series ran to only 550 copies, 50 of which were not for sale. Jackson's advertisement attempted to deflect the elitist connotations of the series' production. The *TLS* reviewer of the series was less willing to perceive any such bridging. He acknowledged that the "truly satisfied being is he who, like the solitary and punctilious diner, can sip the essence and delight in the setting at the same time," but claimed that unlike the "pure book-collector" for whom "any dunce" could have written the story so long as it is well-produced, the "pure reader…is as unlikely to buy one short story at a time as a hungry man is to buy individual biscuits" *("Furnival Books" 268*). The reviewer emphasized different reading publics and clearly placed these books beyond the scope of the "man of slender purse." He suggested that the content of the books did not ultimately depend upon its production and that the production may in fact have been a deterrent for the "pure reader." On the whole, the review dealt less with each of the four Furnival Books it reviewed than it did with the implications of the look and cost of the series: He was more concerned with production than with content, and, unlike the founders of the Golden Cockerel Press, he implied there is no intrinsic relation between the mode of production and the value of the content.

And yet Liam O'Flaherty's foreword to *The Stars, The World, and The Women* removes any doubt as to writers' awareness of the implications of their production. It is the perfect articulation of that Progressive Bookshop conflict between bohemian indifference and professional aspiration. Within this special edition, which is necessarily removed from mass-market success, O'Flaherty argues that Davies has not been granted the appreciation that he deserves; that he is unacknowledged by the arbiters of artistic value. Both O'Flaherty and Davies were aware that Davies had not yet established himself in the commercial market, and the foreword reads like a neurotic attempt to both justify Davies's right to commercial success and to celebrate his more artistically legitimate removal from it. O'Flaherty describes the literary world as a fortress:

> Established writers are within, comfortable, with money in their pockets, good wine in their bellies, and with their minds dulled with success. Young writers are roaming about outside in the slums that surround the fortress, consorting with the ruffians and truffs of the alleyways. They jeer at those within, hurl stones at them and lampoon them. Those within keep out those without, by every foul means. (7)

The established writer is only half envied for the comfort and success he has gained. Those denied access to "the fortress," the "roaming," "slumming," and "consorting" representatives of youth and vigour, have not had their "minds dulled with success." O'Flaherty does not envy established writers, as "they seem to have a dull time of it" (7), yet his foreword is written, he explains, "to call attention to the claims of Rhys Davies for admission to the literary fortress" (7). He announces that Davies should not be ignored by "the pompous journals that make literary reputations" (8). If Davies does not get the appreciation that he deserves, O'Flaherty fears that Davies "may be driven by gross bodily needs to become a literary critic, a reviewer, or an essayist, or a publisher's reader" (9)—all tasks which Davies eventually performed—a servant of the very establishment that refuses him admission to the "fortress."

The question obviously arises, why would Davies, "a poet, with passion and fine judgment" (O'Flaherty 8), want to dull his mind by becoming established? In O'Flaherty's construction, Davies's exclusion from "the fortress" and segregation within the special edition, is both his curse as a professional writer and his claim to legitimacy as an artist. O'Flaherty identifies, even if he perhaps does not recognize, the double bind that Davies is in. He eludes the paradox in his argument in the same spirit as the series' advertisement, which claims to speak to "the man of slender purse"—the man who would not typically purchase expensive non-mass produced books. His foreword, and by extension The Furnival Series as a whole, seeks to "escape the domination of the fortress" by demonstrating how "cultured book-lovers should draw the attention of the public to good writers. If the public responds by buying good books, instead of the books recommended by the critics in the great literary journals, then good writers can buy their own weekly wine and turkey" (O'Flaherty 9). O'Flaherty imagines a noble group of artists who, with sympathetic publishers at their backs, may bypass the cultural hegemony of the established literati and liberate the public from the pre-packaged tastes of mainstream cultural producers.

For Davies, therefore, the special edition market was not just an alternative means of income to be exploited while he desperately sought entrance to the literary fortress, it was also a means of shoring up a legitimacy in response to his rejection from the large commercial publishers. The special edition market in general regarded itself as a last line of defense against the modernizing trends that many saw as a threat to the exclusivity and legitimacy of art. Davies's various productions within special editions placed him within a very limited and specialized market, with a special kind of commodity status, and a discrete and elite publicity.

"I turned my back on the 'artistic' crowd": The Established Author

That Davies was finally lured to Heinemann by A. Dywe Evans is a sure sign that he had attracted enough attention and established enough of a reputation to be sought after by a respectable and established publishing company. In 1941, Davies explained to his friend, the theatre critic Raymond B. Marriott, that "six or seven years ago [he] turned [his] back on the 'artistic' crowd in fear—not that some virtue or vitality is entirely absent from them, but because their world is too enclosed and parasitic" (RD to RM First Sunday after Easter 1941 NLW MS 20897 52). The same turn from bohemian communities is perceptible in Davies's semi-autobiographical novel *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*, also written in 1941. Penry, Davies's counterpart and the focus of the second half of the novel, returns to his industrial South Wales home, as Davies himself so often did:

> He was glad to be back. Glad not to have yielded to the Mediterranean temptation again, with its sunny drug. Glad to be away from the studio chatter, the café conferences over the world's problems, the midnight parties, the Parisian terrace talk of art, art, art, and the unanchored decorative women and the rootless men. Glad to have cut away from the cerebral love affairs, the communism, and the restless search for a security which could not exist in these years. The old defeatist pain was defeated here. Here was tough homespun. If its pattern was plain it was also real. He felt that a period had closed for him. The 'wild oats' period, he supposed. But he did not feel a prodigal son. And there had been some glory, for himself at least if not for others. (274-275)

It is no coincidence that the period to which Davies refers in both of these passages, the point at which Penry and Davies turned their backs on bohemian artistic crowds, would have been about the time that Davies was lured into Heinemann's lists: a time, I am guessing, when he began to feel that he had, despite himself, achieved the security he had worked so long for. I wonder if it was not so much with a sense of *fear* that he fled the bohemian 'artistic' life of his early career, but with a sense of *relief* that he could look forward to some measure of security.

Although Davies had, by 1936, carved out the market niche that would serve him, with little variation, until his death in 1978, the pattern established in the first ten years of his career continued throughout his subsequent work. He consistently returned to an awareness of the market, indulged in the role and identity of the artist, and occupied an ambivalent relationship to his place as an artist in the mass market. Ironically, however, one could argue that it was the relative security found with Heinemann that gave Davies the piece of mind to be an artist, unhindered by menial material necessities. Well into Davies's career, after a decade and a half with Heinemann, we get Davies's clearest and most high-flown artistic rhetoric in which he imagines himself as the very embodiment of artistic expression. In a 1950 BBC interview with Glyn Jones, Davies explains,

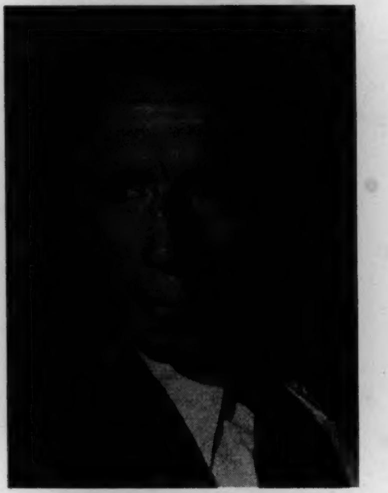

FIGURE 10: RHYS DAVIES, AGED 54.

> I become completely absorbed. I, as a person, am obliterated, my everyday identity is submerged. Personally I think this part of the writer's job is an interesting mystery. As far as I can understand it, I think that when the writer's everyday ego is submerged, the purest part of his mind remains in the ascendant to guide him—or rather, acts as a judge of the mass of raw materials, the dreams and experiences, that are stored in the subconscious. ("Every Genuine Writer" 12)

Davies adapts Freudian language to a Keatsian negative sublime. The artist who is always in for and filling some other body has no self and therefore, no political commitment or bias—he is the pure servant of his subject. As Davies continues,

> the writer, while writing is in the category of the actor—an actor capable of impersonating anything and anybody, regardless of age, sex, or class. This impersonation or impression certainly can become exhausting, though not for me loathsome. I don't wonder that most good writers I know look worn and somewhat battered, as most actors do off stage. ("Every Genuine Writer" 12)

This 49-year-old Davies has apparently come a long way from anything so crass as an awareness of, let alone a dependence upon, a public and a market. He serves a much higher master now. For the creative writer "mustn't write social propaganda or political speeches, his task is to look into the secrets of the eternal private heart" ("Every Genuine Writer" 15).

And yet artists do not always fare well in Davies's fiction and he is too well aware of the demands of the artist's profession to maintain such idealisms as he expresses in his Glyn Jones interview. "Tears, Idle Tears" (1958), written five years later, is a particularly good example of Davies's continued engagement of the relationship of art to its market. "Tears, Idle Tears" tells the story of a young scholar, Francis, loosely modeled on Davies's younger bohemian self, who is caught between his idol, a famous painter coming to terms with the conflict between his art and his fame, and the painter's lonesome and disregarded wife, Elinor. The painter, Ewart, whose "professional achievements were beyond dispute" (419), is dissatisfied with his work and searches—just as Davies claimed to have searched for "the secrets of the eternal private heart"—for "a still unknown part of [himself]" (419). Ewart cannot come to terms with the commercialization that fame has imposed upon his art, and devotes his time to a "vindication" of Gauguin, dreaming of a similar escape into artistic isolation. Francis explains as much when Ewart's frustrated and neglected wife praises the wrong kind of success in her husband:

> "But he's successful. He's not a beginner. He can sell all his work. He's in the Tate!"
>
> Francis, half in irritation, made another attempt.... "Every genuine artist is possessed by a demon—really a god, I suppose. It demands an eternal allegiance but often it takes a sleep, allowing the artist to attend to such matters as getting married or paying income tax. But when wide-awake and at its most possessive the god's demands are ruthless. The artist then wants to flee from everything and, I dare say, everybody. This isn't selfishness in

> him or egocentricity; it's a need to sacrifice himself entirely to the grueling hard work of serving his master." (424)

And Ewart's own characterization of the artist's obligation is not too different from Francis's idealized description: "An artist's chief struggle is to keep himself in pure, Jesus Christ condition. That means, I suppose, a condition of terribly knowledgeable innocence, so that he can realize God's lilies of the field as He saw them" (420). His greatest complaint of his paintings is that "They sell too well.... It's insulting how quickly they sell" (418). And again: "'I could sell this painting at once for a couple of hundred pounds,' he said, disgustedly. 'I've got the smell of success...pain!'" (419). Ewart and his work are insulted by their reduction to the capital of his name, or signature, and not even Francis's devoted and pure praise can dispel the artist's fear of losing control of his art to the exterior forces of evaluation and acclaim. And from this frustration comes his Gauguin-dream of escaping to an "island," which echoes Davies recollection of Lawrence's repudiation of the "'proper' public of the big publishing houses" (RD to CL 2 Sept. 1929 SL V36 xv 18-2). "Tears, Idle Tears" is the story of an artist hopelessly defending the purity of his art against his inevitable circulation within the mechanisms of his production and reception.

Significantly, Francis, unlike Davies, has not yet turned his back on the 'artistic' crowd. This story is loosely based upon a visit Davies made to Liam O'Flaherty and his wife while in France in 1928, when Davies was very much "yielding to the Mediterranean temptation." Francis, realizing the domestic chaos he has entered, longs to return to his bohemian café-life: "In St. Tropez, at that hour, the casual friends he had picked up during the last three weeks would be gathered in the cafés and a party in somebody's house would be sure to develop: expatriates of many nationalities, garrulous flotsam of the arts" (413). Francis is still part of the "enclosed and parasitic" bohemian world of art; still too much enamored with art as an end in itself, and if Ewart appears in the story as a demi-god prostrate to his own eternal powers, it is because we see him so much through Francis's idealism.

Ultimately, however, Ewart is revealed as a petty, jealous husband and not the "all-seeing artist" (421) that Francis supposes him to be. Both Francis's idealism and Ewart's power to identify his artistic destiny are dismissed at the end of the story in the form of a letter from Francis's friend, who is, appropriately, an art reviewer. Having written to explain the events of his visit, Francis receives a long letter that comprises the final judgment, the final authoritative voice, of the story. The tone of this letter is dismissive and irreverent, beginning, "Tut, tut, what a tornado in a teacup" (440), and this final arbitrative voice of the reviewer intervenes between the artist and his sense of ownership over his art and undercuts any notion of the artist's isolation and purity. In the end, Davies places all of the high talk of art and the noble obligation of the artist within the intervening networks of its reception, dissemination and evaluation. As the reviewer puts it, "No one can make the Gauguin gesture of flight today; there aren't any islands of escape left, either in the outside world or inside one's consciousness" (442). Not only has Ewart become little more than a petty and jealous man, but his artistic holiness has been put in its proper, unprivileged place.

"What a film your beautiful book would make!": From Bohemia to Bestsellers and Big Screens

So it would seem that Davies undercuts a self-image that he elsewhere promotes. Rather than try to resolve this contradiction, I wish to accept it and highlight it. There is no reason to expect that security with Heinemann would obliterate the conflict that Davies experienced in the early stages of his career, however relieved he may have been that he was no longer struggling for release from his bohemian obscurity. His conflicts were certainly less urgent, appearing less and less frequently in his correspondence, but no less present for that. In fact, Davies was not entirely satisfied with his circumstances with Heinemann. He was well aware of the fact that he was not a very successful author and on at least one occasion, in 1951 (at about the time he was telling Glyn Jones what a pure and dedicated artist he was), Davies contemplated leaving Heinemann. One can only assume that he was dissatisfied with Heinemann's handling of his books. It is clear from two letters from H. E. Bates that Davies was considering leaving Heinemann for Bates' publishers, Michael Joseph, for whom Davies worked as a reader in 1940s. Bates encouraged Davies to leave Heinemann by emphasizing a perceived discrepancy between Davies's worth and his sales: "My feeling is that you are a lot better writer than your sales have ever given you credit for" (HEB to RD 7 Feb. 1951 HRHRC). His publishers, he goes on to assure Davies, "are immensely efficient sellers of books" (HEB to RD 7 Feb. 1951 HRHRC). Bates went so far as to discuss Davies with Robert Lusty, an employee of Michael Joseph from the company's beginning and future chairman of Hutchinson, and urged Davies to approach Field Roscoe "the literary solicitor" (HEB to RD 17 Feb. 1951 HRHRC) regarding breaking his contract with Heinemann.

This possibility of leaving Heinemann in 1951 was by no means sudden, for sales were often a concern with Davies. Just before leaving Putnam, Davies was unhappy with the poor sales of *Honey and Bread* (1935) lamenting, "I don't suppose I ever will be a best seller!" (RD to HWS 3 July 1935 HRHRC). If the desire for better sales precipitated Davies's move to Heinemann then the same desire was no doubt influencing his dissatisfaction with Heinemann in 1951. We see this same concern regarding sales, and the familiar retreat into the self-defining terms of the artist, five years later in a letter to George Bullock: "I must say that (if this war hadn't taken such a serious turn?) I thought [*Under the Rose*] would stand a chance of selling. Also I had one eye on stage and screen. But, alas, I'm beginning to see that it's not in me to write a best seller. As I wrote it I began to forget the bloody public and became entirely absorbed in it for myself" (RD to GB July/Aug 1940 HRHRC). This 39-year-old Davies still shares the 27-year-old Davies's desire to be more popular, and even aspires to that most popular of venues, film.

In fact, *Under The Rose* and its adaptation for the stage, *No Escape*, were close to being produced as a film three times. Once in 1941, and then again in 1946 and 1948. The first accepted offer came from a British firm, Gainsburough Pictures, but fell through because the financial backer had been bombed. Davies was disappointed that the movie was not going to be made. He turned down the second offer of £750 from the Ostrer brothers—although he was not in a position to spurn the money—as he did not want to ruin the chances for the play (RD to RM 24 Nov. 1946 NLW MS 20897 E 85). The third offer was from an independent filmmaker that Davies's agents urged him to decline, as they did not trust him (HH to RD 14 July 1948 HRHRC). With this one title, Davies repeatedly conceived of his work as film. He is at first very comfortable with the idea, later turns down money in favour of stage production, and is finally advised to decline an offer for purely financial reasons. Whatever the circumstances, it is clear that Davies had occasion to consider, and sometimes to long for, adapting his work for the big screen and its audiences.

All this worrying over film adaptation is strange coming from one who is typically suspicious of cinema in the same terms that he is suspicious of popular fiction. I have already referred to Davies's inclusion of cinema in his list of modern developments threatening a true appreciation of literature in his essay, "The Nose." Closer to the period in question, Davies is even more explicit about the dangers of cinema when speaking of the living conditions in post-Depression Rhondda:

> And what did I see up there on the magic screen? But words now fail me. I mentioned earlier the sense of insult one feels visually in the Rhondda. But here, concentrated on that white rectangle, intelligence, beauty, poetry, even ordinary horse-sense, lay utterly annihilated. Oh, Hollywood, Hollywood, Hollywood! ("From My Notebook (III)" 15)

In contrast to the shallowness of cinema, the stage has a far more authentic appeal: "I left the New Theatre to-night on wings" ("From My Notebook (III)" 15). It is here where he finds "the magic, the authentic magic of the theatre, which can make the pleasures of cinema and radio seem so shallow" (16). Similarly, in *The Painted King* (1954), the secretary to an actor, playwright and producer of popular operettas echoes this sentiment: "In any case,…does acting count on the screen? Isn't it ironed out of actors?" (77). And there seem to have been very few films that Davies admired: He refers to a French film and a Russian film, *Mother*, in positive terms; he recommends *Citizen Cane* as a must-see; and has a liking for Charlie Chaplin movies. But on the whole, his strongest views on films are negative ones.

And yet Davies had film-making on his mind—along with the wider and more popular audiences that they imply—for a large part of his career. As early as 1935, he wrote to Marriott asking if Marriott could "see a film in [a] story [of Davies's]" and wondered "what black magic…one exercise[d] to get film companies to read print?" (RD to RM 3 Nov. 1935 NLW MS 20897 E 17). In 1944, he was in a "turmoil of mind" over a film offer for *The Black Venus*, which he would liked to have taken for the money, but was reluctant, as he wanted to make this novel into a play as well (RD to RM 25 Oct. 1944 NLW MS 20897 E 66). In 1950 Ken Annakin, film director of Gainsburough Pictures, approached Davies for a second time, on this occasion to do an adaptation of Davies's story, "A Boy with a Trumpet" (KA to RD 8 Apr. 1950 HRHRC). In 1952, George R. Busy wanted to buy the rights for "Gents Only" for a "low-budgeted production" in a series of adaptations that would include films based on the works of Rudyard Kipling, Frank O'Conner, and Robert Burns (GRB to HH, Nov. 24, 1952 HRHRC). And, finally, in 1963 Davies wrote to Kay Dick that he had "been having writing-hell over a story for a Paris man who talks (and how!) about doing a film" (RD to KD 9 July 1963 HRHRC). None of these ventures came to fruition, either due to Davies's unwillingness or to the lack of funds. Further, none of these ventures were Hollywood productions, and Davies did draw a distinction between Hollywood and what he regarded as more artistic films. Notice, for instance, the elitist tone adopted in this letter to Lahr while Davies was staying in Blaenclydach: "I shall be here a month. One cheerful thing—the Russian film "Mother" is being shown here this week, so I shall not lack for a little sustenance. They appear to be ignorant of the kind of film it is, and advertise it as though it's an American "Mammy and roses-round-the-door" production" (RD to CL 1929/1930? SL V 36 iii 30-2). Similarly, when trying to find a publisher for *The Red Hills*, he explained to Lahr that he was thinking about doing a special version for America by making it "into a more dramatic novel" (RD to CL undated SL V36 xv 21-2) and I wonder if he was thinking about a Hollywood sensationalism here too. So, perhaps Davies hoped for something less popular for the adaptation of his novels. But, if we regard Davies's continual flirtation with the big screen in the context of his half-longing admission that he is not a best selling author and his consistent desire to write for a wider public, I do not think that that we can be too certain that he would have declined a shot at the Hollywood screen.

In a review of *The Dark Daughters* (1946), the reviewer paused in his description of the novel to assert, "What a film all this would make!" (Strachey 396). On another occasion, "a lone lady 'fan'" wrote to Davies to praise *Under the Rose*, exclaiming, "What a film your beautiful book would make!" (qtd. in RD to GB Feb. 16, 1941 HRHRC). What did these readers see in Davies's work that made him so adaptable to the big screen? Presumably, it was the same quality seen by those who approached him throughout his career to adapt his work to film. Perhaps what they saw, in a more positive (and popular) fashion, is the quality for which an American reviewer dismissed *Rings on Her Fingers*: "It becomes increasingly apparent that one way to write what the motion-picture studios call the de-luxe English trash is to imitate D. H. Lawrence" (R. 108). In other words, we return to the terms established at the beginning of the chapter. Davies is once again accused of turning the highbrow into the lowbrow, of being too sensational, too "Elinor Glyn," as it were. Or, more seriously, he represents a site at which those categories must confront their boundaries.

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Chapter Two

"You may be famous": A Genuine Art, a Marketable Wales?

In 1936, Glyn Roberts wrote an article in the *Western Mail* entitled, "They Interpret Wales—in English." The article pointed out that, for the first time, the English reading audience was being confronted with several novels a year which dealt specifically with Welsh life "in a manner that arrest[ed] their attention." Chief among these writers, Roberts claimed, was Rhys Davies, a "pure artist" who "[u]nder the benevolent wing of Charles Evans [Heinemann] in London and the somewhat larger one of Mr. Nelson Doubleday in New York,…[was], or should [have been], exempt from the economic worries which never yet failed, sentimental legends notwithstanding, to hamper a writer." According to Roberts, Davies was the fortunate recipient of a timely interest in Welsh life: "at this moment, Englishmen and Americans and their wives and their daughters are interested in Wales, in the detail and pattern of Welsh life, in its realities, not the honest romances of Allen Raine and Miss Napean." Roberts encouraged the readers of *The Western Mail* to pick up their pens and join the fray: "Have you ever felt the urge to write a novel about your friends and your town? Well, write it, write it—now is your time. You may be famous—you may, to be unsublime but not so ridiculous, either, you may make money." Davies, savvy market writer that he was, could have been no less aware of this opportunity than Roberts.

By emphasizing Davies's relationship to a largely London-based literary market, I have, to a certain degree, removed him from the category of "Anglo-Welsh" author and the warm nationalist sense of belonging that the term can imply. But I do not want to suggest that thinking of Davies as first and foremost a professional writer necessarily excludes his national themes from the kinds of anxieties worked out in the preceding chapter. Davies's Welsh identity and his professionalism cannot be separated, and Welsh subjects form much of his production and reception as a writer. Wales has long occupied an important place in the English imagination and Davies was among the first twentieth-century writers to exploit the English demand for things Welsh. However, such a crass fulfillment of demand was also at odds with Davies's need to be thought of as, in Roberts's words, a "pure artist." As such, Davies's Welsh national representations are conflicted along the same lines as his artist/professional identity.

This chapter begins by considering the place of Wales in the English literary market from the nineteenth-century through to the years of Davies's career and identifies several well-established productions of Welshness that appealed to the English reader throughout the past two centuries. These productions persisted into Davies's career and appear in his fiction. Davies was not only aware of the demands for Welsh fiction, but exploited his reception as a representative Welshman. I then outline Davies's representation of Wales and discuss Davies's interpretation of Welsh history and culture as a fulfillment of an English desire for a picture-book nationalism. However, in conclusion, I demonstrate that just as often as Davies exploited his Welshness, he resisted nationality in favour of an idealized art, which culminated in actively un-Welshing his production under Heinemann.

The Anglo-Welsh Book in England

English publishers from the eighteenth century to the present have exhibited a persistent eagerness to publish books dealing with Welsh life. Davies, who manipulated a Welsh identity to the constant though changeful demands of an English readership, lived in daily awareness that being Welsh was a cache that he literally could not afford to ignore. As early as the late eighteenth century, William Lane's Minerva Press published such writers as Agnes Maria Bennett (c. 1750-1808), whose *Anna; or Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* (1785) sold out on the day of its publication (Rhydderch 2). Both Francesca Rhydderch and Jane Aaron have noted the wealth of Welsh titles on the Minerva lists (and others) and point to this ubiquity as evidence of a widespread popular interest in Wales and Welsh life. Such titles as *Powis Castle*, *Three Old Maids of the House of Penruddock*, *Eve of Cambria*, and *Gwelygordd*, all published between 1780 and 1820, indicate an attraction to Celtic settings in popular fiction (Rhydderch 3). The enormous success of Bennett's romances led, Aaron argues, to many copy-cat Welsh romances. So persistent are the themes, characters and settings of these popular novels that Aaron imagines Lane issuing a formula not unlike those of contemporary romance publishers: "make it picaresque, sentimental, mildly Gothic and set it in Wales!" (Aaron "National Seduction" 34). Both Aaron and Rhyddarch argue that the popularity of Welsh romances was "symptomatic of an anxiety concerning the relationship of Wales and England" (Rhyddarch 1): Their settings provided an exotic tourist-landscape and their narratives almost invariably confirmed Welsh sub-ordinance to an emerging Britain (Aaron 32, Rhydderch 4).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the representative writer of a popular fictive Wales was Allen Raine (Anne Adaliza Beynon Puddicome 1836-1908), "the first Welsh author to sell a million, to employ an agent, to have her work filmed, to live comfortably on her fiction" (Harris "Anglo-Welsh" 355). For John Harris, historian of the Anglo-Welsh book, Anglo-Welsh literature begins with Raine's dramatic breakthrough into mainstream literature. Her best-selling career is testament to an English taste for a romantic fictive Wales. But Raine's was not the only Wales on sale. Gwyn Jones, for instance, attempts to resist the popular English conceptions of Raine's Wales by claiming that Anglo-Welsh literature truly began in 1915 with the publication of Caradoc Evans' collection of short stories, *My People*:

> with Caradoc Evans the war-horn was blown, the gauntlet thrown down, and the gates of the temple shattered. Or in a homelier metaphor, it was as though some new-style yahoo had flung a bucket of dung through the Welsh parlour window, and in case anyone was genteel or well-meaning enough not to notice anything amiss, had flung the bucket in after, with a long-reverberating clangor. (77)

Jones colourfully illustrates the impression that Evans is usually credited with changing the tenor of Welsh representations in the popular imagination. He debunked a Welsh Kailyard school of writing and "destroyed the sandcastle dynasty of Allen Raine and the Maid of Cefn Ydfa, and sank it in the sea" (Gwyn Jones 78). However, as has been persistently demonstrated, Evans disillusioned the Welsh more than he did the English, for Evans's picture of depravity confirmed another set of English assumptions regarding Wales: assumptions that were deeply bound in imperial and class-based prejudices regarding the ignorance and savagery of the Welsh working class.

My People was an enormously successful and controversial book. In England it was praised as a great work of art with, according to the *Globe*, "no small ethnographical value" (qtd. in Harris "Introduction" 36), and it set a prevailing standard for what readers came to expect from their Welsh authors. Davies was very aware of these expectations and his first three stories, and many thereafter, are clearly written in the sordid vein of Caradoc Evans. When Davies's entrance into the London literary scene was announced by the *Times Literary Supplement*, they had no trouble recognizing that the stories of *The Song of Songs and Other Stories* (1927) followed "the convention established by Mr. Caradoc Evans" in presenting a Wales of "sordidness" and hypocrisy (February 17, 1927). Nor did *The Western Mail* have any difficulty noticing that the stories were "distinctly of the Caradoc Evans variety" (qtd in *The New Coterie*). What worked to make Evans the most talked-about Anglo-Welsh writer of the early twentieth century also worked to get Davies's first three stories published in *The New Coterie* and his first collection of stories published by Lahr.

Like the exotic backgrounds of Bennett and Raine, which fed off a well-established popular fiction industry's exploitation of a Romantic Welsh nationalism coupled with imperial dreams of a united Britain, this Wales of "sordidness" was nothing new when Evans appeared on the London literary scene. When England and English readers weren't indulging in Wales as an exotic background for English middle-class romances, they were receiving it as an ignorant, backward, and immoral place of primitives. As Gwyneth Tyson Roberts has clearly demonstrated in *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire*, England had long deployed a very negative image of Wales from *at least* the time of the Education Report (or Blue Books) of 1847. The Blue Books represented an emergent and abiding dismissal of a culturally and morally bereft Wales. Years later, Evans along with some less renowned writers before him, confirmed these associations. The Education commission was sent to Wales in reaction to the spate of labour riots in the first half of the nineteenth century. Strangely, although the commissioners were investigating the "causes" of such labour revolts as the Rebecca Riots and Chartist outbreaks, their "findings" locate the origin of Welsh misrule in racial, national and linguistic terms rather than economic ones. According to the Blue Books, the Welsh irrationality, their passion and their "peculiar excitability" (qtd in Roberts, "Under the Hatches" 183) were to blame. The report claimed that the Welsh had "an utter lack of method in thinking" and that their "reasoning powers [were] less developed than those of the English" (qtd in Roberts, "Under the Hatches" 183). One does not need to go too deeply into the report before one sees the marks of the colonial discourse so central to British rule at home and abroad at that time:

> Superstition prevails. Belief in charms, supernatural appearances, and even in witchcraft, sturdily survive all the civilizing and light which has long ago banished these remnants of the dark ages elsewhere. Little or none of such light has yet penetrated the dense darkness which, harboured by their language, and undisturbed by availing efforts of enlightenment, enshrouds the minds of the people. (qtd in *The Language of the Blue Books* 187)

It is hard to believe that this horrible place is but a three-hour train ride from London.

And yet these popular misconceptions continued well into the twentieth century. *The Perfidious Welshman* (1910) could well have been written with The Blue Books in hand. The publishers, Stanley Paul & co., advised that "No Englishman contemplating a visit to the principality should fail to read this outspoken and entertaining book" ("Catalogue" 10). Chapter seven bears the title, "Education, Art, and Politics" and begins, "No people, as a class, clamour more loudly about education than the Cymry, yet, even though England has done her level best to send the light of knowledge into the outer darkness of Wales, the latter is still wrapped in clouds of gloom" (94). And what the Welshman lacks "in the culture of the fine arts" (19), *The Perfidious Welshman* warns the English tourist, he makes up for "by becoming an accomplished liar" (19): "To be truthful is apparently beyond his ability, and falsehoods slide off his tongue with such an easy grace and such staggering prolificacy that one may well wonder—as every visitor to Wales has wondered—whether Taffy really knows the difference between veracity and barefaced lying at all" (19-20). Written during the Welsh Home Rule controversy, the book sold well enough for the publishers to pay the author "Draig Glas" (Arthur Tyssilio Johnson), to write a response, *The*

Welshman's Reputation (1911), under the pseudonym, "An Englishman" (*New Companion* 581). Stanley Paul & co., publishers of romances and mysteries as well as other equally scathing books about Scotland and Wales, seem to have been quite adept at manipulating the public's interest in Wales.

Evans did not, however, suppress the desire for romantic Wales, nor is he Davies's only reference for the ways in which Wales could be sold. To trace the continuity of this fascination with things Welsh further into the twentieth century we need look no further than Richard Llewellyn's best-selling novel, *How Green Was My Valley* (1939). If anyone may be said to have created an international picture of Wales, it is Richard Llewellyn and his publisher, Michael Joseph. At a time when a modest run of 2000 was the norm for first novels, Joseph set a first run of 25,000, and *How Green Was My Valley* sold 1000 copies a week for the first two years of its publication and 60,000 copies after the appearance of John Ford's film adaptation in 1942 (Harris "Hallelujah Book" 57). Macmillan bought the American rights for £6,600, colonial sales almost matched British sales, and the book went on to become an international bestseller (Harris "Hallelujah Book" 57).

It is easy to see by the sales and popularity of such writers as Bennett, Raine, Evans, Llewellyn, and the many lesser examples following their lead, that English audiences had a taste for representations of Wales and that a long-established market existed for popular fiction of Wales before and throughout Davies's career. To this day, Aaron points out, major publishing houses like Corgi, Headline, Arrow, and Sphere are "pouring out squat fat volumes on family life and national struggles" from fifteenth-century Wales to early twentieth-century Wales ("Hoydens" 23). And the success of these predominantly female writers has encouraged many similar Welsh chroniclers.

Publishing Wales

Whether romantic, realist, or condemnatory, these popular depictions of Wales did not sell by virtue of their accuracy. In fact, very often they sold by virtue of their inaccuracy, and in each case, the publishers had a hand in presenting a more marketable commodity to the consuming public. As Lori Ween has discussed in the context of black American fiction, authors who are often granted an ethnic authenticity cannot in fact be separated from the consumer culture in which their texts are produced. Consumer culture produces "the idea of an authentic voice that has the right to tell a particular story. The paratexts, including the jacket art, the quotations on the back flap, reviews, interviews, and marketing materials, all play a role in building the perception of authenticity for a literary text" (94). The authors of these texts are equally packaged and the "name of the author circulates around the literary market as an indicator of authority and authenticity" (96). Stanley Paul and Co.'s deployment of one author's identity as both Welsh and English is an obvious example of this process. And Ween makes the important qualification that this process is not a case of an originally "pure" text being corrupted by publishing and marketing, but of the "various 'layers of rhetorical accretion' becom[ing] part of the book, circulating as part of the package that we come to know as a novel" (91). This same process is apparent in the production of a Welsh ethnicity. John Harris describes the general conditions in which Anglo-Welsh novels were published in England, and provides an invaluable picture of the circumstances in which Davies worked. He argues that the first wave of Anglo-Welsh literature in the thirties was "part of a growth in fiction which helped the publishing industry withstand the slump…: whatever the specifics of Wales, a distinctiveness of setting caught the attention of fiction editors" (358). In the particular case of Wales, representatives of the publishing industry perceived that Wales was most effectively written through the familiar pastoral romance encountered in Raine, or even Llewellyn, "the abiding rural Wales with its centuries old traditions and imagination" (357). Edward Garnett, says as much to Geraint Goodwin in his capacity as reader for Cape: "And the environment should be ancestral, to give the feeling of roots deep in the Welsh soil […] your course is perfectly clear now […] What you've got to do is to *be the* Welsh novelist-recorder & -narrator of the *popular* Welsh life—*as you know it*" (qtd in Harris "Anglo-Welsh" 357). Harris leaves the connotations of these words implied, but there are pleas here for authenticity ("recorder", "*you know it*"), a romantic traditional Wales, and, I would argue by pointing to a possible double-meaning of "popular," an acknowledgement that the ultimate goal is sales.

Harris illustrates the circulation of Welsh identities in the literary market with specific reference to such famous and notorious Anglo-Welsh authors as Allen Raine, Caradoc Evans, and Richard Llewellyn. Allen Raine's first novel, *A Welsh Singer* (1897), which a young Emlyn Williams "never dreamt of connecting…with the Welsh world around [him]" (qtd. in Harris "Anglo-Welsh" 355) was originally titled *Myfanwy* before Hutchinsons replaced this strange Welsh name with a title that was more obviously Welsh and yet also more emphatically English. Andrew Melrose's production of *My People* called for an even greater intervention. Fearing the moral backlash aimed at Evans's sordid stories, he trumped up Evans's authenticity as the native informant. The front cover of the original dust-jacket replaces any name and title information with a prefatory blurb boldly justifying the venture:

> These stories of the Welsh peasantry, *by one of themselves*, are not meat for babes. The justification for the author's realistic pictures of peasant life, *as he knows it*, is the obvious sincerity of his aim, which is to portray that he may make ashamed. A well-known man of letters and a critic has expressed the opinion that "My People" is "the best literature that has so far come out of Wales." (qtd. in Harris "Introduction" 34 italics added).

Again, the process described by Ween is obvious here. English readers were being reassured by an English establishment of publisher and critic that not only was this the best literature "to come out of Wales" (as limited, presumably, as that may be), but, even better, this was the real dirt on their savage little neighbours. Melrose's dust-jacket was a lumbering intermediary between author and public which set the terms for most of the subsequent debate surrounding the book.

Michael Joseph's alterations to *How Green Was My Valley* were subtler, though no less profound. For instance, Joseph removed all place names from Llewellyn's manuscript. Maesteg, Mardy, Miskin, Pontypridd, Porth, Tonyrefail, Treherbert, Ystrad, all disappeared. Cardiff became "the Town", and anywhere beyond the abstracted Valley became "over the mountain" (Harris "Hallelujah Book" 57). Joseph clearly moved away from historical or political realism and sought an abstracted romantic Wales that English readers could enter without any great shock of strangeness; it was a tourist land and an extension of British domestic harmony. As the publicity tells us, this is a safe Wales, "when South Wales prospered, and coal-dust had not blackened the greenness of the valley. It is not an industrial or 'proletarian' novel" (qtd. in Harris "Hallelujah Book" 57). *How Green Was My Valley* was only superficially a proletarian novel. It deals with the passing of a Welsh Golden Age before the Depression dwindled the initial prosperity of industrialization and is best described (by words M. Wynn Thomas uses in reference to Jack Jones) as "industrial pastoral" (Thomas *Internal Difference* 28). Dai Smith makes much the same point claiming that *How Green Was My Valley* "retains its grip because its dystopian message can always be conjured away by the utopia of its Edenic Past" (136). It memorializes its lost past more than it documents the blackening and fragmenting effects of modern industrialization and impending depression.

As we shall see, Davies was clearly facing these same expectations throughout much of his career. In his early career, he was aware of "the precarious world of publishing, a world of little magazines, limited editions, and shaky enterprises" (Harris "Anglo-Welsh" 356). Indeed, his Welsh nationality and subject matter was a potentially stabilizing resource that saw him through the first half of his career, and proved difficult to cast off thereafter.

The Professional Welshman

Of course, not everyone agreed with Glyn Roberts's call for Welshmen to capitalize on their homeland by selling it to Englishmen and Americans. In 1946, for instance, Davies Aberpennar expressed quite a different sentiment in *The Welsh Nationalist*:

> It is common knowledge that now a Welshman writing in English—so long as he jeers at Nonconformity—stands to gain nothing by concealing his Welshness. On the contrary, to have been born in Wales, or even to be able to boast of a great-grandmother who had a partiality to Welsh rabbit (mispronounced "rarebit"), is a commercial asset and a stepping-stone to fame in the English literary world. (8)

These "professional Welshman" (8), as Aberpennar called them, posed a serious threat to the cause of Welsh nationhood, and Rhys Davies, "lost on the ocean of English life" (8), was among the worst of those who served up Wales to English tastes.

To what extent do Aberpennar's criticisms apply to Davies, or, to what extent did Davies exploit his Welshness? How should we understand the national themes that dominated so much of Davies's career both in terms of his preoccupation with a literary market that offered him little success and in the context of his reactionary claims to artistic independence? We must first establish to what extent Davies was aware of his English audience. Davies certainly could not have been insensitive to the fact that he was very strongly recognized and touted as a "Welshman." His reviewers praised him for his intrinsic Welshness, his publishers advertised him as the native informant, and he began his career by changing his name from Vivian Rees Davies to the more identifiably Welsh Rhys Davies. As one reviewer writes, "Even if Mr. Rhys Davies's name was not what it was, it would be obvious that 'Rings on Her Fingers' was written by a Welshman. Not only is his setting a Welsh mining town, but there is *throughout the writing* a Celtic imagery and violence, an insistence on the importance of physical passion, and, it must be said, an entire lack of humour and, sometimes, of reason" (Rev. of *Rings on Her Fingers* 642 italics added). As a description of Welsh writing, this passage is not as exhaustive as this reviewer might like to think. As an example of Davies's reception it is typical. His writing is often read as *intrinsically* Welsh and he as the native informant. Similarly, consider these words on the dust-jacket flap of Davies's Britain in Pictures book, *The Story of Wales* (1942): "As he tells the story he fills in the landscape, draws in the character and evokes the very essence of his country and his people for *in his own writing* are apparent those qualities of sensibility, imagination, humour and vigour which are the inheritance of every true Welshman" (inside front flap italics added). Though differing somewhat in their perception of the "true Welsh spirit" (one apparently finds the Welsh humourous while the other doesn't), and differing in their relation to Davies (one at the level of reception and the other at the level of production), both imagine Davies and his writing as *intrinsically* Welsh. Further, Davies was apparently quite willing to market himself in this way—even to allow himself to be fashioned into the representative Welshman through such ventures as *The Story of Wales* and the 1937 travel guide *My Wales* in which he describes the "individual Welsh spirit, poetic, imaginative, musically rowdy, its vision seldom wandering anywhere beyond Offa's Dyke" (*My Wales* 13). These words sound suspiciously like the language deployed in the advertisements for his work and the reviews which state authoritatively that Davies's writing reveals that "he has Welsh life and character in the marrow of his bones" ("Welsh Tales" 449).

That these productions of the Welsh Davies were intended for an English readership is unavoidably clear in the advertisements for the My Country Series, of which Davies's *My Wales* is a part. Of the four books advertised at the back of *My Wales* (*My Ireland*, *My Scotland*, *My England*, and *My Wales*) *My England* stands out as the anomaly. The ad for *My Ireland*, after explaining that the author's (Lord Dunsany's) ancestry goes back to the twelfth century, insists that the book provides "the *complete* character of a people" (italics added). Similarly, A. G. Macdonell "*clearly portrays*" the "character and genius of his own people" (italics added). And Davies himself provides a "*full* description of modern life in that miniature but picturesque and lively land" (italics added). When one reads the ad for *My England* however, one wonders if perhaps Edward Shanks does not know his country quite as well as the other writers seem to, for he does not *clearly portray* a *complete* or *full* description of anything, but "emphasizes that this work is his England. It is England as he sees it." These advertisements are sensitive to a readership that would be critical of representations of the Self but quite comfortable with a totalizing representation of the Other.

England's Wales

Reading *My Wales*, it is apparent that Davies is aware that he is writing to an English audience. The earliest pages of the book begin by addressing the English gaze in the form of London schoolchildren's essay assignments on Wales. The several short pieces display a stereotypical perception of Wales that Davies, presumably, is going to rectify in *My Wales*. However, the entire Prelude of the book is not about Wales, but the relationship between Wales and England. It sets up *My Wales* as an extended narrative act of tourism. He reassures his English readership by stating that Wales now lives in "amicable harmony with [its] grand neighbour, England" (19), and he invites the visitor who is weary of English life and who "wishes to see something of the land's original atmosphere" to "go *down* to see the Welsh people" (italics added 19). *My Wales*, published by Jarrolds, clearly situated Wales in an English context. It emerged from English publishers and made homage to an English readership, even going so far as to end with a chapter entitled, "Holiday Trip," which provides a "short trip across part of the country" (229), hitting all the hot spots, and including Davies's insider's slant on each of these places. We are even invited into Davies's intimate visit with a farming family locked in a "northern fastness of mountains" (254), where one finds a "very old race of people… uncorrupted" (256).

The commitments of *My Wales* are trumpeted most loudly in the final pages of the book when Davies addresses the now famous arson of an R.A.F. depot under construction in Caernarvonshire just three months before the completion of the book. The three arsonists, Saunders Lewis, D. T. Williams, and Lewis Valentine, were all founding members of Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party. Saunders Lewis was also a scholar and poet committed to illuminating and writing the Welsh language literature of Wales and who was to pronounce proudly in 1939 that there could be no Anglo-Welsh literature as the term was an oxymoron which did nothing to halt the "cosmopolitan industrial machine" (Lewis 9) infecting Wales and the "purity" (Lewis 10) of the Welsh language. Davies, who came to the end of his book not long after these fires of revolt had died down, and while the furor they created still smoldered, saw the arson as a sign of the dangers of the Welsh nationalists who operated in "[i]solation in the haughtiness of tribal consciousness" (*My Wales* 283). In contrast, Davies longed for a more internationalist, or at least European, view and attributed the cause of this "rabid Nationalism" (*My Wales* 284) to "[t]oo much in-breeding, both physical and spiritual…[and] [t]oo great an identification with the same limited associations [which result] either in a sense of deadness or in a neurotic scream" (*My Wales* 284). Despite his appeal for a less nationalist perspective, even here, Davies is mired in the racialist discourse that informs so much of his writing, and what comes out most strongly is his belief that the future of Wales is in the fate of England: a belief which is equally apparent in his fatalistic pronouncements upon the Welsh language: "I do not believe the Welsh language has a future" (*My Wales* 227). And even more dismissive: "To me it is a lovely tongue to be cultivated in the same way as some people cultivate orchids, or keep Persian cats: a hobby yielding much private delight and sometimes a prize at an exhibition" (*My Wales* 219).

Davies and the Welsh Readership

Davies's commitment to an English readership is as clear as his dismissal of Welsh readers. His views on the Welsh language in *My Wales* are written in the context of his opinion on the state of Welsh literature and his general distaste for the Welsh readership in both English and Welsh. According to Davies, the literary market in Wales is English: "Go into any bookshop in Wales" he states "and you will be in England" (*My Wales* 227). Wales cannot sustain a "full-bodied literature" (*My Wales* 211) because it cannot support "full-time writers" (*My Wales* 211) like himself: "Amateurs are not enough; they cannot offer sustained work. But it would be difficult for a professional writer to live on the royalties of books in Welsh" (*My Wales* 211). And, as he later states, "the chances are that good and sustained work is more likely to come from a writer who devotes his whole time and mind to literary creation than from those harried by the cares of teaching, preaching, and shopkeeping" (*My Wales* 222). In other words, a literature needs strong supporting institutions, and those institutions were in London, published in English, and have sustained several "professional Welshman" far more successfully than Wales could ever have done for itself before, perhaps, the emergence of the Welsh Arts Council in 1967.

Naturally, the reaction from Wales to Welsh writers in London was defensive, and Davies had little patience for the cries of traitor and turncoat called at the departing backs of writers who wrote books on Wales for an English readership:

> If…the author is one of those peculiar people with a liking for things that are best forgotten, then howls go up. Columns of correspondence appear as the novel gets read by the public: warm letters protest that Welsh people *do not* do this, that, and the other; do not speak this way *nor* that way; do not go to bed in their day shirts; are not immoral and drunkards; do not eat peas with a knife; this is not a *true* mirror of Welsh life, but a lot of perverted trash, etc. (*My Wales* 209-210)

Davies speaks from experience. So accustomed was he to criticism from Wales in his early career that when *Count Your Blessings* failed to receive an unequivocally critical review from *The Western Mail*, Davies exclaimed that he had received "a disappointingly broad-minded [review]…. They've given up abusing me. They even admit there's two sides to a medal" (RD to CL 28 Feb. 1932 SL V 36 (iii) 32). When Davies's first novel, *The Withered Root*, was reviewed by *The Western Mail*, it was immediately brought to task for its representation of the Welsh and its treatment of Welsh dialect. The reviewer criticized Davies for being unrealistic and unfair, with an eye only for the "sordid and ugly," and complains that "Davies denies…beauty in any form or measure to the people he writes about—the Welsh, we are told. … If Wales were anything like Mr. Davies imagines her to be we doubt whether "brilliant" [as Davies is advertised to be] children would be possible" ("A Novel of Wales"). The reviewer takes particular dislike to Davies's treatment of the Welsh dialogue, arguing that "English readers" ("A Novel of Wales") would laugh at such a "silly" ("A Novel of Wales") literal translation of the Welsh language. The same criticism was launched against Caradoc Evan's representation of Welsh dialect, which has been described as "a vividly peculiar English idiolect, the equivalent of redskin-speak in old cowboy films, that made the Welsh-speaking community appear to be condemning itself out of its own mouth" (Thomas *Corresponding* 46). In both cases, these authors represent threats to English perceptions of Wales. Indeed, *The Withered Root* was advertised in much the same fashion as *My People*. Holden marketed Davies's authenticity and objectivity, making the book into a kind of insider documentary account of the Welsh. Davies, provided a "searching analysis of his own people…[with] nothing extenuate, or set down in malice" (qtd in ("A Novel of Wales").

Within a week of the appearance of the *Western Mail* review of *The Withered Root*, Davies responded to the reviewer's criticisms of his use of Welsh dialogue. He claimed that it would be ridiculous for him "to make a Welsh miner speak in the 'refined' manner of, say, Golders Green or even Roath Park. Indeed, one is thankful, after hearing the correct rigidity of 'superior' accents, to get back to the Welsh Valleys and listen to that dialogue which for some reason or another irritates your reviewer" ("Mr Rhys Davies and Welsh Dialogue" 9:C). The exchange between Davies and his reviewer produced a debate that carried on for three more correspondences regarding the interpretation of the Anglo-Welsh dialogue in print (T. Gywnn Jones, W. J., "Corroboration"). What is at stake is not simply grammatical and etymological minutiae, but the representation of a people to those outside, and the fear that this "distorted dialogue" ("Corroboration") may make the Welsh look "silly." This is why Davies is able to claim in *My Wales* ten years later that whenever "a new Welsh-setting novel appears, most Welsh periodicals do not treat it as a literary production to be judged according to the calm canons prevailing, say, in *The Times Literary Supplement*. It is taken up with an air of suspicion to begin with, and scrutinized carefully for any evidence of derogatory matter" (*My Wales* 209). Davies's readers, therefore, are clearly not Welsh ones and his Wales is not only published by English publishers, but also judged by English critics, sold to English book stores, and written, ultimately, for the more lucrative and "full-bodied" English market.

A similar and earlier dismissal of Wales and the Welsh is found in Davies's 1931 contribution to John Gawsworth's *Ten Contemporaries*, "Writing about the Welsh." Davies explains that

> it is not a pleasant job to write stories of Welsh people. Writing in English, one is published in London and one has to battle with the ancient recoil of the English from Welsh life. Across the border, in Wales, books—especially novels—are looked upon as frivolous unnecessary things that cost money to obtain, that frequently encourage sin and blasphemy and provoke indolence, that sometimes even dare to criticize Welsh life. ("Writing About the Welsh" 41)

Davies locates himself in a double-bind, but it becomes clear in the course of the essay that he is writing to an English audience and speaking as the native informant in spite of that "ancient recoil." After criticizing the English antipathy to Wales, he explains that "the Welsh, these misunderstandings of their neighbours forgotten, have their charms" (42). Their "miniature nationality" (42) is "bucolic and simple" (42) and they are "beautifully child-like" (42) with the "stupid crudity of a child" (43) and a "natural amusing greed" (43). The difference between the representation of the Welsh in this essay and that found in *My Wales* is in the production and audiences of the two pieces. In *My Wales*, he is the established Welsh writer invited to write from his expertise in things Welsh. In "Writing About the Welsh" he is a nobody author just beginning to shape himself into the writer he will become.

"Writing About the Welsh" was published before Davies had achieved any significant success, and *Ten Contemporaries*, like Davies's experience with special editions, was part of a practice that was uniquely located between an idealized aestheticization of the book and a kind of capitalist speculation in an author's career. *Ten Contemporaries* provides bibliographical details on ten authors who Gawsworth believed might become the sought after artists of the future. Davies shared this distinction with Aschelles Abercrombie, George Egerton, Wilfred Gibson, Stephen Hudson, Roberts Nichols, Herbert E. Palmer, Sir Ronald Ross, M. P. Shiel, , and, finally, Edith Sitwell. As Viscount Esher's foreword to *Ten Contemporaries* explains, the book was conceived in the "modern habit of speculating in the unknown future of writers not yet securely established in the niche of fame" (12). *Ten Contemporaries* was produced in the vicissitudes of the literary market and represents a particularly charged instance of the paradox between art and its economic dependence. Davies, therefore, knowing that he had yet to make his name, and knowing that *Ten Contemporaries* was an opportunity to make that name, must have written his essay with a great deal of self-consciousness. In a similar paradox to that conveyed by Liam O'Flaherty's foreword to *The Stars, The World and The Women*, Davies's inclusion in this collection is both a validation of his value as a writer in spite of his lack of financial success and an endorsement for his right to fame. And within this conflict, this relatively unknown author was inventing himself as a writer and an artist. This essay was written as a piece of self-promotion, clearly situating and advertising Davies as *a writer about the Welsh*.

Writing Wales

How did Davies write about the Welsh? He imagined his Wales largely in terms of the two dominant perceptions of Welshness. It was black with the coal of the South and its miners, or it was as green as the mountains and rural Wales. We can think of Davies's Wales as composed of two oppositional chronotopes. Mikhail Bakhtin conceived of the chronotope as a means of identifying certain generic trends and their constitution as "a part of a particular society's contribution to understanding actions and events" (Morson and Emerson 371). A chronotope refers to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (*Dialogic* 84). Understanding the persistence of genres, especially within the novel, and the various relationships between time and space within those genres, provide insights into the historical, social and cultural makeup of the context in which genres flourish. This concept is particularly useful when discussing Davies's representation of Wales. Nations are often imagined in a nexus of space and time. They are located within borders and placed within a history to lend substance to the identification of a people. Or, conversely, the people are imagined as a folk who are indigenously rooted to the land in the immemorial past.

Wales is often envisioned as being composed of two oppositional chronotopes: the chronotope of the town and the chronotope of the country. These chronotopes are the natural outcome of a nation that was, for much of its recent history, paradoxically defined by both sudden industrialization and the passing ancient way of life that industrialization supplanted. The Welsh town and the Welsh country have specific spatial and temporal associations. The town is undeniably *in* history. It is an effect of material process and passage through time: it rose with the emergence of industrialization in Wales and it is headed to an economic collapse, or apocalypse. The country is an eternal space recalling the ancient history and community of Wales; it is pure, clean, and untouched by the material forces of history. The country recalls a time before industry and is, for Davies, the true inheritance of the Welsh nation and its people.

Davies's sense of an ancient Welsh past informs even his most "industrial" representations and is closely analogous to Bakhtin's idyllic chronotope, which is characterized by "the immanent unity of folkloric time" (Bakhtin 225). The idyll finds expression predominantly in the special relationship that time has to space in the idyll:

> an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies, its familiar mountains, valleys, fields, rivers and forests, and one's own home. Idyllic life and its events are inseparable from this concrete, spatial corner of the world where the fathers and the grandfathers lived and where one's children and their children will live. This little spatial world is limited and sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places, with the rest of the world. But in this little spatially limited world a sequence of generations is located that is potentially without limit. The unity of the life of generations (in general, the life of men) in an idyll is in most instances primarily defined by the *unity of place*, by the age-old rooting of the life of generations to a single place, from which this life, in all its events, is inseparable. (225)

The idyll subordinates time to space and unifies a people and place in the same way that the nation is imagined as existing across time and yet simultaneously located in an eternal originary past. It is not surprising, therefore, that, for

Bakhtin, the form of the idyll earned its earliest significance in eighteenth-century idyllic novels in which "the real organic time of idyllic life…opposed the frivolous, fragmented time of city life or even…historical time" (Bakhtin 228). In Davies, the idyllic chronotope is not simply located in rural Wales and the Welsh past; it is a transferable idea and an ever-present escape from the industrial experience of Wales. So when one is in rural Wales, one is simultaneously in the Welsh past, and when one ascends a mountain in South Wales, leaving the begrimed and populated valley below, one has returned to the bucolic rural pre-industrial Wales, casting off all of the shackles of contemporaneity. This ancient Wales is a Wales of ancient customs in untouched landscapes; a largely imaginary nation that recalls its Druids and bards, its mysterious and rebellious leaders, and its holy language. Its defensive mountains hold back not only the English, but the ravages of time as well. It is peopled by the true inhabitants of the land whose blood is in tune with the rhythms of their humble, rural work.

Davies's sense of the Welsh nation is a distinctly Romantic one surviving from the general European search for the comfortable myths of national belonging that emerged before world events began to erode such over-confident and sovereign self-affirmations (Brennan 44). It is located in the idea of the folk whose authenticity and continuous relationship to the past resists the urban cosmopolitanism that threatens the integrity of the nation with foreign ideas (Brennan 53). The Romantic movement imagined the Welsh "as children of nature" (Morgan 95) or as an escape from "urban luxuries and mob politics" (Morgan 95). This was the Wales of the persistent myths of British tourism, of which William Borrow's *Wild Wales* is still the best example:

> The Romantic Wales that was created by those three generations of publicists, eighteenth-century antiquaries, radicals and reactionaries remained in the background of Welsh life throughout the nineteenth century, but even as it was created, it seemed at odds with the emerging reality of early nineteenth-century Wales and, by the 1840s and 1850s, was being relentlessly besieged and attacked. (Morgan 95)

Yes, the idea of ancient Wales was relentlessly besieged and attacked, but by no means was it eliminated, and a market for a Romantic Wales persisted well into the twentieth century.

An example of the ways in which this ancient Wales persists within Davies's representation of industrial Wales is found in the very Lawrentian short story, "Blodwen." "Blodwen" is the story of the title character's relationship to the two very different men who court her, and her passionate escape from the class-bound Valley of respectability into an erotically enabling pre-industrial Wales. Oswald Vaughn is a lawyer who courts Blodwen with volumes of

Wordsworth and Tennyson. His association with English literature and English law marks him as un-Welsh and inauthentic. However, he is favoured by Blodwen’s mother because Blodwen’s “grandfather had been an ordinary collier and even now they were neither working- nor upper-class” (87) and Vaughn offers a “step-up marriage” (87). In contrast to Vaughn, Pugh Jibbons is a simple, rough and passionate, mountain-dwelling peddler. Although originally shunned by Blodwen, he offers a more visceral attraction: “You’re a woman for me. And I think I’m a man for you. That’s what I think. I could do for you what you want and I want. That’s what I feel” (88). He is a typically Lawrentian hero and he criticizes Blodwen’s prudish show of resistance to their shared desire: “Pah, but your mind is stupid, because you won’t be what you want to be” (89). Inevitably, Blodwen succumbs to Pugh, skipping out on her appointed meeting with Vaughn to discuss their plans for their impending wedding: “But Pugh Jibbons, in his old stony house on the hillside, was laying a flower on the white hillock of her belly, with tender exquisite touch a wide, flat, white marguerite flower, its stalk bitten off, his mouth pressing it into her rose white belly, laughing” (93). Blodwen’s turn to Pugh and passion is also a *re*turn to the land and the Welsh past. Not only does her name translate to the “white flower” of passionate freedom she achieves at the end of the story, but she awakens to her need of Pugh not, finally, through him, but through her encounter with the mountain landscape:

> The black jagged rocks jutting out on the brow of the mountains were like a menace. She began to laugh, shaking out her wild hair; she unwound her scarf and bared her throat to the sharp slap of the wind. She would like to dance on the mountain-top, she would like to shake her limbs and breasts until they were hard and lusty as the wintry earth. She forgot her destination in the world below.
>
> She had reached the top. Night was not yet; and out of the grey seas of mist the distant hills rolled like horses. She saw thick massive limbs, gigantic flanks and long ribbed sides of hills. She saw plunging heads with foam at their mouths. She saw the great bodies of the hills, and in her own body she knew them. (92)

The landscape is an erotic and physical one, and when we next meet Blodwen, she is naked in Pugh’s “old stony house on the hillside.” Further, Pugh and the mountain landscape he inhabits liberate Blodwen’s passions largely because they hearken to the idyllic Welsh past:

> He was of the Welsh who have not submitted to industrialism, Nonconformity or imitation of the English. He looked as though he had issued from a cave in the mountains. He was swarthy and thick-set, with rounded powerful limbs and strong dark tufts of hair everywhere. Winter and summer he bathed in the river and lived

> in a tiny house away up on the mountainside, near the lower slope where his allotment of vegetables was. (81)

We can hear in his "rounded powerful limbs" the echo of the "thick massive limbs" of the hills; and Blodwen, who knows "the great bodies of the hills...in her own body," herself becomes a "white hillock" sprouting floral life. Davies creates a strong relationship between the sexual encounter of these two characters and the landscape in which they connect: a landscape that still remembers the pre-industrial past and so enables the desires that the industrial, Nonconformist present forecloses.

In 1946, Davies wrote an essay entitled "Time and the Welsh Mountains." As the title of the article suggests, Davies perceives the purest form of Wales in temporal and spatial terms, before and away from the industrialization of the South. This essay was part of a collection called *Countryside Character* (1946) and in it Davies assumes a role very similar to the one represented by his Britain in Pictures book, *The Story of Wales*, or the My Country Series, anthologizing himself and Wales in a kind of snapshot collection of places, necessarily limited in scope, but no less ideologically loaded for that. "Time and the Welsh Mountains" derives from Davies's experiences while visiting some relations in his parents' native Cardiganshire. The experience was an important one for Davies as it reappeared in several forms throughout his career. I have already mentioned its appearance in *My Wales* (1937). There are also the more abstracted cases of Penllyn and Henllys in *The Perishable Quality* (1957) and *Girl Waiting in the Shade* (1960), respectively. And it was adapted into a final chapter of *Print of a Hare's Foot* (1967) that was cut by Heinemann in the final drafts. It even finds mention in his personal correspondence when shortly after his visit to the farm, Davies writes to Raymond Marriott that he has spent two days in a "most primitive farm" in which "[l]ife and faces…[are] much the same…as 500 years ago" (RD to RB 22 Oct 1936 NLW MS 20897 E 26). This quaint and ancient farm reappears throughout five decades of Davies's writing and represents his continued unwillingness to completely cast off the mantle of the representative Welshman.

Davies has come to the farm of relations in North Wales amid the "[o]ld, old mountains" (210) and feels "in the night of this land a living sense of an antiquity that has not changed" (215). It is here that he locates the land of the true Welsh descendants:

> It is in such isolated districts as this, protected by mountains, that the pure racial types are found untarnished by time. Now and again, with a start of recognition, one comes across them in the industrial parts of Wales, but there they have an accidental and almost alien look. Close-packed communal living tends, through

> the generations, to obliterate the original hallmarks and to produce imitative types belonging solely to the coal-pits, the ironfields and the factories. Sometimes I have sat in houses of this pastoral district and, listening to the antique language and watching the vivid play of expression on these cleanly pure faces, felt time abolished. It was that very day the Roman legions left the fringes of the western land with its strange magic green like the green in a cat's eye. The passing of the centuries is an illusion; Owain Glyndwr is still in the mountains and the alien English soldiers still affrighted by this wild land, with its witches brew of sudden storms, and by this battling with a magician who consorted with anti-English "spirits of the vasty deep." (213)

Wild Wales rises again, and there were still, it seems, strange and foreign countries to explore just over the English border, and well contained within a collection of *British* landscapes.

"Time and the Welsh Mountains" portrays an only superficially alien place for it is quite a familiar picture of the English imagination. Indeed, it was not long before the publication of *Countryside Character*, that Davies enlisted the same Welsh fighting spirit into the militaristic zeal of a wartime broadcast for the BBC. The Welsh of this earlier piece are in harmony with their English neighbours, and even Owain Glyndwr is drafted into service, only this time his name has acquired an English spelling and pronunciation. This BBC broadcast was a "13 ½ minute little gabble" (RD to GB 9 Nov. 1940 HRHRC) as part of a "Peoples of Britain" series in the Empire programme, broadcast four times in twelve hours to the colonies and North America. Davies was very excited about the size of his audience, which may well have been the largest single audience he had had for any one piece of writing. In this war-time broadcast, Davies wants to convey the Welsh "stoutness in time of battle" (1). The regions of Wales, according to Davies, "are the most truly democratic places in the world…His Type is an abomination to Hitlerism" (1). And though Davies stresses that "the Welsh blood is very pure, old and independent" (2), and though he acknowledges the typical Welsh antipathy for England, this new world conflict has placed Wales "with and of the English" (2); the 'Taffies' along with "the Jocks, the Paddies, the Tommies, and all the sons of the Empire, we are all now one British family in the fight together" (2). Davies indulges in inspiring descriptions of the Welsh singing spirit rising to meet their call to battle in the tradition of a glorious past: "Perhaps the ghost of our great national warrior, Owen Glendower, was leaning down from the mountain tops and smiling too" (2). This "Glendower" is a benevolent Welsh rebel and a much better representative of the "resistance" offered in Davies's fiction: It is the kind of playful Welsh rebellion implied in this English schoolgirl's report on Wales that features favourably in the broadcast:

> The welsh [sic] shout a lot and rattle the place up. They are good natured, but they think themselves everybody. Some of them has ginger curly hair. They speak funny and always have a smile on their faces. Welsh people soon get very angry and soon get up their tempers. They are very fierce and are good fighters. We are great friends now, England and Wales. They are civilized today." (2-3)

This 1940 wartime broadcast reveals the sympathies underlying Davies's representations of Wales. It is the logical result of a career based upon pandering to an English demand for a Wales that confirmed an English imagination. And the majority of Davies's representations of Wales envision a Welsh belonging and integrity that ultimately preserves a British, rather than a Welsh perspective. For this is Wales as sold in the bookshops, as mediated by the *Times Literary Supplement* and consumed by English readers looking for an afternoon's excursion to Wales (to paraphrase one of Davies's criticisms of Jack Jones).

Romantic Wales

Two of Davies's novels that deliver this exotic Wales most adeptly appear, in the first case, at the beginning of Davies's relative success as a writer and, in the second case, at the end of his interest in being a writer of Wales. The first novel is *Honey and Bread* (1935), Davies's second novel to be published by Putnam and the last novel he would publish before entering Heinemann's lists. The second novel is *The Black Venus* (1946), which sold better than any other of Davies's books and achieved a second printing in its first month during war-time restrictions on publishing. Both novels deal with the preservation of the ancient life and customs of Wales against alien modern influences. Although these two novels are the most representative of Davies's deployment of an exotic Wales, their popular mythic fantasies underlie even Davies's most "political" novels.

Honey and Bread is the first of the three novels in the Glan Ystrad trilogy, which Davies intended as a fulfillment of the vogue for political fiction in the 1930s. Far from fulfilling the political agenda of the trilogy, however, *Honey and Bread* is a nostalgic novel looking backward to a prelapsarian Wales rather than toward the future political necessities of the contemporary economic realities of depressed Wales. At the heart of the novel is a clichéd love affair between Owen Llewellyn, the older, poetic son of the aristocratic Llewellyn family, and the earthy peasant girl, Bronwen. For Owen, Bronwen represents the eternal youth and beauty of his ancestral lands, and for Bronwen, Owen is "like a story come true in her life; he was handsome and romantic and gentle" (157). While this love affair is set against the sinking of the first mines in Owen's valley and the sale of his family's lands to English mining enterprises, the background merely serves to heighten the tragic love between a peasant girl and an aristocratic young man in the fantasyland of the Welsh past.

Not coincidentally, the novel's hero shares his name with the Welsh national hero and Davies does not neglect to invoke the historical Wales he becomes so adept at writing. For *Honey and Bread* is an historical romance that joins a hackneyed love-plot with the Romantic nationalism of the folk:

> Through this valley…the invading army of Henry IV. [sic] had passed after being sadly routed by Owain Glyndwr in September 1405. Again, in this fifth invasion, the march had been buffeted and thrashed by the rains and storms called forth by the necromancer Owain, and it was a sad procession that filed back through the proud valley where Cadwgan, Owain's henchman, had whetted his battle-axe in response to the chieftain's call. Up in the fastnesses of the deep dark hills the natives rode in triumph; let the winds scream out of the valley's deep throat, the rains lash in torrent, they were made stronger than the storms, they could sing in wild unison with the winds and delight in the torn heavens. (50)

Our romantic hero, the tubercular Owen, who ultimately dies along with his valley, is the descendent of this proud racial spirit and the novel's defender of the Romantic Welsh past. His love affair with the peasant, Bronwen, representative of the Welsh folk, is a continuation of this noble resistance to the inevitable conquest of his lands.

The ideal offered by *Honey and Bread* is a classless world steeped in a magical paganism of possibility. Owen wonders what "subtle pagan secrets" (42) have been lost and his "blood long[s] for incantations, strange embraces, and the processes of magic" (42). His need to preserve the land of his forefathers ultimately expresses itself in his obsession for Bronwen and what he regards as her native authenticity and connection to the land. Owen imagines himself as physically linked to the land and rails against its defilement from the industrial invasion:

> He had laid himself out to become the stones of the house, the pastures, the orchard, the maids and youths, the stock. Romantically and as a poet. He could not turn his possessive hands and eyes away from the beloved place. He could not give it up to those unspeakable marauders. If it were wounded and ravaged, stabbed with girders and ulcerated with pits--then something within him, his own real life-pulse, would die too.... (106)

What his hands and eyes seek to possess, however, is not the land, but Bronwen, for she, in Owen's words "is made of our trees and our earth and our songs and our magic" (46). His passion for Bronwen is not for Bronwen the woman, but for Bronwen the ideal of the land: "He clung closer to her; he could not tell her all she possessed—and all he perceived in her—but through their mutual touch she would be aware. And he knew that he drew from her vitality and health: in her body was heaped the pure wealth of the earth, and his blood was warmed by it" (132). Like Pugh Jibbons in "Blodwen," Bronwen has a primordial connection to the land. Even her name translates from the Welsh as "white hill," invoking the purity of the land that Owen defends.

Furthermore, Owen and Bronwen's love replicates the Romantic search for the authenticity of the folk. Owen turns away from the new industries threatening his home, from his mother's desire to trade in the ancestral home for a metropolitan London life, and from a household overrun by "modern" music, "modern" novels, *Frazer's Magazine* and *John Bull*, and looks instead to Bronwen, the inheritor and mainstay of the past. At best, Bronwen is a fetish object of a Romantic nationalist. Owen even goes so far as to instruct Bronwen that when they meet she is not to wear "some horrid stiff best garment"(105), but a "charming" and "modest peasant frock" that "connected her easily to how he thought of her—her body mysterious under a pastoral rag" (105). For him, she is "a country maid such as were sung in old and sometimes rude ballads" (101).

Ultimately, Owen must make way for the new industrial order that prevails at the end of the novel. However, despite the novel's elegiac tone, one is more aware of the nostalgia that the novel *depicts* than the bleak future that it *predicts*. One is far more aware of an idyllic past than one is of the mines or the encroaching gray dwellings of Davies's contemporary South Wales. This novel exists for its pastoral landscapes, for its quaint feudal harmony and its colourful cast of picturesque characters, like the gardener, Monday Evans, who "looked evil in a sub-human fashion, a throw-back to the dirt and squalor of the worst tribes that at one time infested the local hills…a smelly old satyr about the gardens [giving] the place a reminiscence of former dark ages" (107); or Alias Morris, a pagan landowner and "dirty man who…had the blood of princes in his veins, ancient fighting princes who made his country proud" (114); or "the witch Rebecca" (236) who emits a "wild wailing chant in the Welsh language… recognized as a witch's curse" (297); or Robert ab Gruffydd, "the local prophet" (326) living in his "stinking hut far up the mountain" (326) who still "possessed a mysterious power" (326) and who speaks out against the mines and agitates the workers to resist the new regime that has no place for such as he. Whatever else it does, *Honey and Bread* provides something very much along the lines of Bennett and Raine—books in which "Welsh scenery is invariably much admired, Welsh harpists, druids, bards, folk customs, and folk music praised, and the simple manners of the people extolled—though not their language" (Aaron "National

Seduction" 35). It is the story of the thwarted love of a simple girl and a princely boy set against an exotic and picturesque Wales.

The Black Venus is, to some extent, a critique of patriarchy in that the plot follows the efforts of a strong female protagonist, Olwen Powell, to determine her future, but the story is, as Davies explained, "semi folklore stuff" (RD to AG 9 Nov. 1946 RHAL). It revolves around a quaint Welsh custom and is more preoccupied with the paraphernalia of picturesque Wales than was *Honey and Bread*. *The Black Venus* tells the story of Olwen's use of the Welsh custom of *caru yn y gwely*, "courting in bed," to select a proper husband. Certain community leaders, however, object to such blatant use of a custom that harkens back to the Welsh "dark ages" and makes Wales look like a land of savages to the outside world arriving in motor cars to holiday in the beautiful precincts of "ancient Ayron" (11). Significantly, *caru yn y gwely* was one of the vices singled out by the Blue Books and, appropriately, the impetus behind Ayron's resistance to Olwen comes from the Anglican minister and an English spinster tourist who now makes her home in Ayron. The words of one deacon in particular echo the criticisms launched by the Blue Books: "Correct is he to say that the courting in bed is of the black past, when there was no schooling for poor persons. Today there is no courting in bed in places that are up-to-date. Backward are the places where it is now. And the sneer and the jeer and the rude laugh is pointed to where it is" (28). Olwen resists the modern/English moral invasion and becomes not just a spokesperson for liberated women, but for the nobility of the more pagan and liberal Welsh past prevailing against the modernizing influences threatening the pastoral perfection of this novelized Wales:

> Perhaps it was true that a wide-awake person could bow to those laws and yet outwit them. Was not that the whole secret of a successful life? And was not the body always chained, but only real slaves allowed their minds to be imprisoned? ... She could be like her native country. It was a conquered territory obedient to the material sovereignty of an alien race. But still the old wild soul of Wales pulsed triumphantly within her borders—and here and there, like the tenacious Jewish stock, outside them also. (297)

This is a complex passage pointing to many of Davies's conflicts. The conflation of the sexual resistance and the national one is particularly telling in its illumination of the sexual nature of Davies's exile from Wales and his longing to return to a more liberal (and pagan) Welsh past. His treatment of chains recalls his words in *The Story of Wales* where he describes Welsh subservience to England as a cause of a Welsh independence of spirit: "Chains are curious things. They can be made to vanish while still about one, they can develop inward resources, they can blossom like the pilgrim's staff" (8). Read in the context of *The Black Venus*, these words seem to speak to the hegemony of heteronormativity just as much as they do to Welsh subservience to England. In Olwen, Davies creates a sensualized nationality in opposition to modern moralities imported with an alien modernization. *The Black Venus* may be read as escape fiction in this regard; its narrative is largely a dream vision of an ancestral fantasyland of the Welsh past.

Accordingly, as in *Honey and Bread*, we are once again in the realm of the exotic and picturesque, and all of the most colourfully picturesque and quaint figures are marshaled onto the side of Olwen's use of *caru yn y gwely*. Lizzie Pugh, for instance, is a belligerent hunchback dwarf and the keeper of the titular black Venus, a life-sized ebony statue (once a lamp) stuck amid the clutter of her dark cottage. Pagan little creature that she is, we may see her as the keeper of the secrets and the suppressed passions of the community of Ayron. A quaint figure in "magenta skirts, green stockings and white shoes, and an Indian shawl covering the hump" (13), she exercises a "picturesque blackmail" (14) and "look[s] out at the world from an eyrie beyond blood and tears" (13). Where Lizzie is the secret wisdom of this pagan Wales, Meson Roberts, the local magistrate, is the vocal authority of its ancient heritage. With the "blood of the old traditional princes flow[ing] in his veins" (52), he presides over the narrative "like history, old battle-scarred castles, mountain feuds, local pride of blood and bloody pennants in his mien. He was a chip of one of the old remembering mountains" (211). Even the nonconformist minister, Cynog Thomas, gets a rare generous treatment from a writer who is almost universally opposed to everything that nonconformity represents. Cynog Thomas is "[t]all, with flashing eye and a gleaming mane of silver hair,…impressive as a page of Ecclesiastes. In him the old rivalry between Church and Chapel found a conqueror" (15). He has "the unswerving splendour of those famous nonconformist fighters who long ago kindled a new fire in Wales" (15). Cynog is a far cry from the cruel, passionless "respectability" that characterizes nonconformity in the rest of Davies's writing and even admits to courting in bed in his youth.

With such a strong commitment to this quaint and exotic Welsh past, Davies is never completely able to leave his national themes behind, even when writing in the 1930s of the more international commitments of labour. *A Time to Laugh* (1937), the second novel in the Glan Ystrad trilogy describes the emergent labour movement in Wales. In the face of the novel's admission of an increasing racial diversity in the valleys (7), Davies still resorts to the racial heritage of the Welsh past. When the novel's middle-class protagonist, Dr. Tudor Morris, delivers a speech to a gathering of miners, he does so in the shadow of the Welsh past: "The valley at night always tasted of ancient things, the mountains seemed to remember unruly tribes, long ago battles, druidical circles of brooding men waiting for the moon" (242). And, in the name of just such a past, he calls the miners to action: "Men, get yourselves into proper union and remember that as our forefathers fought for the valleys against the thieving barons of old, so we've got to fight, but in a different way, for a different reason" (242). The miners are moved by a "tribal" (348) and "savage" ancestry more than by a united commitment to labour.

Along with this Welsh racial heritage, *A Time to Laugh* consistently recalls the bucolic past that preceded it in *Honey and Bread*. It ends with the same New Year's rituals that opened and closed *Honey and Bread* and provides several backward glances to the simpler age underwriting the labour revolts: We find Tudor invoking the lost world of *Honey and Bread* in ballads sung to a now elderly Bronwen: "Tudor sat at the piano, at Bronwen's request, and sang in his easy baritone gay old Welsh songs of the pre-nonconformist era: she liked to be reminded now and again of the old bucolic world, when there had not been all this complicated industrial strife" (337). *A Time to Laugh* is only an abstracted narrative of labour which never truly escapes that past that Davies imagines so vividly throughout his writing and which fulfills a popular demand more than a political one, complete with a happy ending, a happily married doctor and his collier's sister wife, and a happy Welsh peasantry/labour force celebrating in the security of their ancient customs: "Far away on the mountain-top at the head of the valley big flames leapt, golden and red. They lit up the green earth, they licked the stars. Small figures, aboriginal-looking, leaping about its glow. There was wild singing down in the valley" (428). Davies's Wales, even at its most "proletarian," is, like that of Richard Llewellyn, aptly described as "industrial pastoral": whatever "complicated industrial strife" (*A Time to Laugh* 337) may afflict Davies's characters, they are always shored up by an abiding Welsh national "heritage." This pastoralism ensures that Davies's novels are never altogether dark and hopeless, and that his Wales remains a pleasant place to visit.

"Down With Passports to Art!": A Genuine Art

As much as Davies produced a marketable Wales, he also conceived of his Wales as a kind of resistance to the modern commodity culture that he resented. For him, the romantic Wales of the Welsh past was also part of a Lawrentian search for a golden age authenticity that is lost in the modern world. If we recall the heavy influence of D. H. Lawrence upon Davies and Davies's perception of Lawrence as a kind of quintessential artist at odds with the modern publishing industry, then we should pay attention when Davies remembers Lawrence pronouncing,

> What the Celts have to learn and cherish in themselves is that sense of mysterious magic that is born with them, the sense of mystery, the dark magic that comes with the night especially, when the moon is due, so that they start and quiver, seeing her rise over their hills, and get her magic into their blood. They want to keep that sense of the magic mystery of the world, a moony magic. That

> will shove all their nonconformity out of them. (*Print of a Hare's Foot* 196)

As in *Honey and Bread*, "Blodwen" and *The Black Venus*, the invocation of an exotic Welsh past is a kind of resistance to modernity and the artificial and inauthentic life it represents, and it is yet another instance of the Davies's artistic aspirations struggling against his marketability. This conflict is apparent in another *Western Mail* article by Glyn Roberts, the critic who opened this chapter. Roberts summarizes the criticisms launched against Davies and in the process describes the exact conflict that Davies faced as a peddler of Welshness and a self-proclaimed artist:

> Or is [Davies], as others have been ready to assert, striving to "cash in" on the stylistic innovations of Caradoc Evans and the late D. H. Lawrence? Is he an upstart highbrow poseur who has carefully exploited that quarter of the world he was fortunate enough to know intimately (only too intimately, as he would probably complain) for his own ends, with the aid of a flair for the production of idiomatic English prose and a canny instinct for knowing the delicate spots in his potential public's make-up? (6)

Here we find that central conflict between the highbrow artist and the professional market writer aligned with Davies's national subject. Roberts recognizes that Wales was a marketable commodity, that Davies was himself commodified, and that this commodification was inconsistent with the artistic discourse that Davies occupied at the same time.

Despite his invocation of a Lawrentian authenticity in regards to Wales, Davies's commitment to an art that resisted the literary market was equally deployed in his frequent and persistent denunciations of nationalisms and borders. While these denunciations are couched in humanism and a commitment to the *universal* qualities of art, one gets the strong sense that the only borders Davies really wants to cast off are the Welsh ones that have too closely defined his career. In 1946, Keidrych Rhys, editor of *Wales*, issued a questionnaire to a number of Anglo-Welsh authors concerning the definition of Anglo-Welsh literature. Davies's responses to some of these questions resist his reduction to the parochial category of "Anglo-Welsh." Davies responded to the first question, which read, "Do you consider yourself an Anglo-Welsh novelist?" (18), with, "No. I am only a writer. Does one (if I may make so bold) think of Henry James, T. S. Eliot as Anglo-American writers? Down with passports to Art!" (18). Similarly, when asked, "Should Anglo-Welsh literature express a Welsh attitude to life and affairs, or should it merely be a literature "about" Welsh things?" Davies responded,

> Neither consciously. If a writer thinks of his work along these lines it tends to become too parochial, narrow. But if he is Welsh by birth, upbringing, and selects a Welsh background and characters for his work, an essence of Wales should be in the work, giving it a national "slant" or flavour. But no flag waving. A curse on flag waving. (18)

Davies sidesteps a widespread and violent debate, its motives political, national, and linguistic, raging among the Welsh cultural elite at this time. As M. Wynn Thomas explains, Welsh writing in English

> originated in the intense intercultural rivalry between traditional Welsh speaking West Wales, which was rural and Nonconformist, and new, industrial, south Wales, where the hegemonic power of English was very apparent. From the very beginning, therefore, the two literatures of modern Wales seemed destined, by the very social processes and configurations which underwrote them, to be enemies and rivals, since the rise of the society that produced the one seemed predicated on—and even dedicated to—the destruction of the culture sustaining the other. (*Corresponding Cultures* 46)

In some quarters, writers like Davies were fighting for the national legitimacy already afforded to Welsh language writers; a debate in which Welshness was often the source of legitimacy and therefore the impetus to writing. Similarly, Peter Macdonald Smith has mapped the emergence of the Anglo-Welsh tradition in a series of three articles on the English language periodicals of Wales. He demonstrates that, starting in the 1930s, there was a perceived need for a tradition in both English and Welsh to shore up a heritage that sought to accommodate bilingualism and create lineages and sympathies between Welsh and English literary traditions within Wales, while engaging in and creating a strong Welsh nationalism in opposition to the English influences that threatened to absorb a "Welsh" one. Davies, however, chose to disassociate himself from his very obvious connection to his Welsh subjects, thinking of himself instead as the pure artist, transcending the particulars of setting and character.

Four years later, in 1950, Davies is again brought to task for his representation of Wales in the BBC radio interview with Glyn Jones discussed in the last chapter. Jones asks Davies how far he thinks his Wales reflects the *real* Wales. Davies responds, as we know, by placing the artist's personal prerogative above any commitment to a national subject: "The 'real Wales'? What *is* the real Wales? Whose is it? Is there some final arbiter, is there some absolute opinion of Wales? Surely every genuine writer finds his own Wales" ("Every Genuine Writer" 15). These words strongly recall Francis's words in "Tears, Idle Tears" quoted in the last chapter,[9] as does Davies's description of his creative endeavor in the same Glyn Jones interview: "I become completely absorbed. I, as a person, am obliterated, my everyday identity submerged" (12). These are exactly the artistic ideals that fall apart in "Tears, Idle Tears." What can Davies be up to in invoking the "genuine artist" in his depiction of Wales? Or what, at least, is the effect? I suggest that Davies was trying to distance his representation of Wales from the taint of commercialism—to defend against the criticism referred to by Glyn Roberts in 1936 and brought to bear heavily by Davies Aberpennar in 1946.

This self-defensiveness is one of the reasons Davies did not want to be pigeon-holed, or even dismissed, as a Welsh writer. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that his stories appeared almost entirely in English periodicals and that he resisted inclusion in any organizations of the London Welsh. When Foyles organized a Welsh Literary Luncheon in 1939 and invited Davies as a guest of honour, along with such writers as Caradoc Evans and Jack Jones, he lied to get out of attending the event (RD to RM undated NLW MS 20897 E 35). Despite his frequent self-productions as the representative Welshman, Davies cultivated an air of speaking from outside Wales and Welsh life: of having escaped and transcended what he now sees more clearly; not unlike the reformed working-class observer, or the Orwellian escapee from the banalities of the lower-middle-class. Davies's is an insider's/outsider's gaze, perfectly tuned to selling a national product to an English audience. Accordingly, he frequently advised young Welsh writers to escape the narrow confines of their nationality: "Live outside of Wales for a time. You will be a better Welshman for it" ("From my Notebook" 11). Or again: "Stop thinking of yourself as a Welsh writer. Consort as much as possible with people who dislike Wales. Or, better still, are completely indifferent to her" (qtd. in Baker 1). So it is from this aloof position and through his canny awareness of the value of his Welsh material in the literary marketplace, that Davies found "his own Wales." But then who really owned Davies's Wales after it was bound in cover and jacket and sold to English readers?

Heinemann's Wales

At the same time that Davies was downplaying his Welshness in the name of art, he was trying to refashion himself in Heinemann's lists in the context of a market that he felt had exhausted Welsh subjects. He is far more aware that he is writing *about* Wales than he lets on to Glyn Jones, for instance, and his idealized claims to artistic transcendence are dubious to say the least. From at least 1946 onwards, Davies deliberately un-Welshed his fiction and his production under Heinemann. Following the success of *The Black Venus* (1944), a picturesque novel about ancient Welsh customs prevailing against modern notions of decency,

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[9] See page 41. Francis explains that "Every genuine artist is possessed by a demon—really a god, I suppose."

Davies wrote to Arnold Gyde of Heinemann that he didn't "want to write too much Welsh semi-folk-lore stuff" (RD to AG 9 Nov. 1946 RHAL). Accordingly, although Davies's next novel, *The Dark Daughters* (1947), is partially set in Wales, he stubbornly downplays the Welsh content. In a synopsis sent to Gyde, Davies explains that while the house in which much of the action occurs is situated in Wales, it

> could be in any country. There is no building of Welsh atmosphere or flavour (except what is intrinsic in the father's character with its blending of mysticism and materialism). My usual Welsh 'inverted' dialogue is not used, since the daughters were born and educated in London and nearly all the other characters are English. (RD AG 9 Nov. 1946 RHAL)

Heinemann doesn't seem to have taken Davies very seriously for, when Davies received the proposed blurb for the novel's jacket, he objected to their emphasis upon the Welsh content of the novel: "As I have deliberately not played for Welsh background and have attempted to lift the story from particular space and even—fundamentally—time, I would like the word 'Welsh' struck out" (RD to AG 17 Nov. 1946 RHAL).

Davies consistently tried to "strike-out" his Welshness and the next eight novels deliberately avoid the working-class Welsh communities with which his name had become synonymous. *The Painted King* (1954) is loosely based upon the life of Ivor Novello whose Welsh mother also finds a place in the novel. However, when Davies sends his description of the novel to Gyde for inclusion in Heinemann's Spring List, he insists, "regarding the mother, I don't want it stated definitely that she is Welsh" (RD to AG 26 Oct. 1953 RHAL). Several years later, when *The Perishable Quality* (1957) is close to coming out, Davies strongly objects to Heinemann's dust jacket. Although this novel, more than any of the other later novels, is set partly in South Wales, most of the action takes place in Carmarthen, bohemian London, and an abstracted middle-class home, and Davies felt again that the novel was only incidentally Welsh. The descriptions of bohemian London illuminates an interesting conflict for it means that *The Perishable Quality* represents Davies's overdue engagement with the forms of life that were his primary experience while he wrote most exclusively about Wales. It is certain that Davies saw this novel as a departure from his earlier writings. So, when confronted with a dust jacket displaying the gray and narrow streets and looming industrial vista of his youth, he wrote despairingly to A. Dwye Evans that he felt the jacket was inappropriate:

> Many thanks for sending the jacket, but, with one exception, it fills me with dismay. Its very obvious background suggests the very thing I went to great pains to avoid—squalor and a miners' "cottage" atmosphere. It's true I've dealt with this in the past but it is out of date now and very hackneyed: some of it *is* in this book—a page or two—but I kept it subdued and marginal and it is of little importance to the book or to the theme implied in the title. This background is false to the book besides being (for me) artistically repulsive, one of the female faces being especially hideous *and* badly drawn. (RD to ADE 26 Feb. 1957 RHAL)

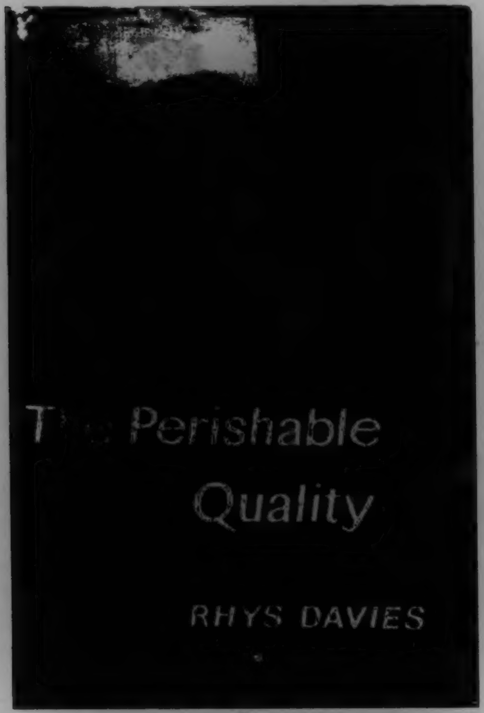

FIGURE 11: FRONT COVER OF DUST JACKET OF *THE PERISHABLE QUALITY* (1957).

Evans did not change the jacket, as he thought it was a good "selling wrapper" (ADE to RD 1 Mar. 1957 RHAL) and Davies was still being packaged, marketed and sold as Heinemann's Welsh writer. Certainly reviewers of *The Perishable Quality* felt comfortable in locating Davies along the same lines advertised by the jacket. *The Guardian Journal* praised Davies's "consummate skill and insight into the character of the Welsh people and towns…[and the] touch of poetry which is inseparable from the essence of Welshness" (press cutting for *PQ* July 8th 1957 RHAL). *Time and Tide* claimed that *The Perishable Quality* "must take its place proudly beside *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* [and] *The Black Venus*" (press cutting for *PQ* July 8th 1957 RHAL), two of Davies's most Welsh novels, rather than the more recent *Dark Daughters* (1947), *Marianne* (1951), *or The Painted King* (1954). Similarly, despite Davies's "very great pains" to distance himself from his Welsh themes, *The Flint County Herald* tells us that Davies has once again "given us a lively and shrewd picture of Welsh life" (press cutting for *PQ* July 8th 1957 RHAL). But by far my favourite description of Davies's apparently imperishably Welsh quality is this one from *Truth*: "This is a winner, as tangy as a leek, as fresh as a daffodil, as warm as a knob of Dowlais coal" (press cutting for *PQ* July 8th 1957 RHAL). Poor Rhys.

While Davies apparently stopped writing of Wales because it was out of date, hackneyed, and unmarketable, he was unable to escape the perception that he filled a demand for sentimental Welshness from both publishers and reviewers who felt that he was, in the words of Arnold Gyde, "more at home in Wales" (AG to RD 3 Nov. 1949 RHAL). However, to be fair to his critics, Davies's new directions in his writing did not stop him from the odd indulgence in the old Welsh flair. *The Perishable Quality* not only lingers in its opening pages in the familiar mining valleys of Davies's earlier novels, but returns to a Carmarthen farm, Penllyn, reminiscent of the one described in *My Wales* and the novel includes an account of a poet, Iolo Williams, easily recognizable as a caricature of Dylan Thomas. *Girl Waiting in the Shade* also retreats into the Welsh countryside to Henllys, a house "retaining…the original quietude of the scarcely changed vale" (96) where we meet Leyshon, "a type…prevalent around [there]" (114) as "unspoiled as [the] valley" (106). Even in *The Painted King*, Madame Annie, the mother who Davies did not want identified definitely as Welsh, wears "a combative Boadicea helmet of parma violets" (63), wants to take her choir to an "annual eisteddfod" (94), and hails from "the countryside where they sing for love…Wild moors and valleys of rain [where] the people have this love of singing together" (51). And to top off Madame Annie's Welshness, her son's theatrical tribute to her life includes "a concert in melodious Wales" (168). So there was always some trace of the old Davies for reviewers to recognize their Welshman.

Clearly, Davies's Wales was many things to him. It was a home, a memory, a myth, a dreamland of a better place. But it was also a commodity in a context that was not entirely his to control. His Wales had to find expression at the same time that Davies was working through his conflicted relationship with the market upon which he depended. His Wales cannot therefore be simply "his own Wales," as he claimed in his Glyn Jones interview. His Wales was the Wales he imagined that an English readership wanted: it was the Wales that Heinemann, Jarrolds, Putnam and Collins wanted: it was the Wales that the "calm canons prevailing…in the *Times Literary Supplement*" expected and upon which Davies built a career that sustained him until his death.

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Chapter Three

"What a Fine Body of Men They are!": Class, Gender and Literary Publics

In 1926, Davies's career as a writer began when he published those first three stories in *The New Coterie*. It would be a career that would rely strongly upon representations of Wales for several decades. In this same year, the death-knell of industrialized Wales finally tolled with the defeat of the General Strike. Davies began to write of Wales at the precise moment that one of its primary forms of life were coming to its fatal end. What did this writer from the Rhondda have to say of this, one of the most catastrophic moments in the oft-catastrophic history of his nation? Well, looking back from 1968, he had this to say: "When the General Strike of 1926 arrived, it was a lark in London" (*Print* 106). It was a lark to him, maybe, eager as he was to leave all associations of Rhondda life behind him. But it was *not* merely a lark to Rupert Croft-Cooke, who, embarking on a writing career in London at the same time and age as Davies, "felt for the first time involved in a political issue" (140). Nor was it a lark for H. E. Bates when he too arrived in 1926 to meet his publishers for the first time and felt "a greater, darker brooding, its roots social and political, in the air" (8). It certainly was no trivial affair for such Welsh writers as B. L. Coombes and Lewis Jones, who wrote of Wales with politics in their pens. Nor for Idris Davies, whose *Angry Summer* (1943), petit-bourgeois sympathies notwithstanding, testifies to the end of an era in 1926. Most of all, the General Strike could not have been a lark in the leftist forum of The Progressive Bookshop, Davies's frequent "port of call." Davies, it seems, chose not to remember the General Strike, to dismiss it. It is no wonder Gollancz was so quick to dismiss Davies for his "appeal to the sort of public which [Gollancz did not] want to cultivate" (RD to CL undated SL V36 iii 27-3).

Davies wrote throughout the 1920s and 1930s when what it meant to write of the working classes was hotly debated by artists, intellectuals, and activists. In leftist quarters, to write of the working classes implied a political responsibility to the cause of labour, and to write of Wales, one of the "depressed areas" of Britain, was to write of the working classes. Whether he liked it or not, Davies was caught up in a debate that had political designs upon his writing. Aware of these expectations, Davies sometimes strove to meet them, sometimes defied them, and sometimes exploited them. On the whole, however, Davies's treatment of class does not derive from leftist commitments. Rather, he conceives of class in terms that obliquely challenged the consumer-culture he resented and upon which he relied, and in ways that validated his self-image as an artist.

Central to Davies's representations of class was his resentment at being a relatively unsuccessful lowbrow or middlebrow writer, and central to Davies's dismissal as a middlebrow or lowbrow writer is his perception of an undiscerning mass readership. As a self-identified "highbrow" writer, Davies feared a type of reader with which he did not wish to associate his name. Davies's constructions of a working class, a middle class, and of an embourgeoisied working class, are all deeply bound in this awareness of the mass and its threat to his claims to artistic authenticity. Davies presents pictures of a "mass" that is, in Peter Carey's words, either a derogatory attempt to provide "an intellectual with a defense against the unidentifiable Other" or a "cosmetic [version] of the mass…fabricated to make the mass more acceptable to intellectuals…by turning [it] into a kind of pastoral" (33). In the first case, Davies resists the modernizing effects that he sees as threatening to standardize culture into commodity consumption in his depiction of a superficial and feminized culture of "respectability" in the middle-class values of the chapel-Welsh. In the second case, he imagines that threat away by indulging in a fantasy of the working-class man as a truly individualized and authentic natural man, who is also bound up in Davies's return to a Wales from which he has been sexually exiled. In either case, Davies's personal anxieties as a professional writer are the main ingredients to the mix.

Despite Davies's preoccupations, many expected that this Welsh writer should naturally be an *authentic* writer of the working class. One of the implied requirements of the authentic working-class writer was that he write with something of a working-class voice, which was imagined as "pure" and unadorned, without "craft," "polish," or "artifice." They expected, therefore, an in*artistic* voice. Strangely, Davies put some effort into living up to these expectations and he often publicly and privately committed himself to the working class. Yet, predictably, these sympathies only go so far and they consistently fall short. Davies is ultimately unable to reconcile his art to the political expectations that many imposed upon his subject.

I begin the chapter by describing Davies's experience of resident exile as a shopkeeper's son in coal-mining Blaenclydach. I then define the Welsh industrial novel and the expectations that cast this petit-bourgeois writer into a working-class one simply because he wrote of Wales: Davies was constructed by many of his reviewers as a politically authentic working-class voice, and he had difficulty reconciling this imposition upon his identity with his highbrow aspirations. Ultimately, Davies's highbrow identification and working-class associations and sympathies resulted in an aestheticization of the working class that had more to do with imagining readerships than classes. Davies's attempts to resolve this conflict are evident in a five-year debate with one of his *TLS* reviewers, G. H. Wells. In his correspondence with Wells, Davies strove to live up to the expectation that he be a political writer of the working-class, but he increasingly realized that he could not conform to the terms of his reception. In place of this working-class fiction, Davies wrote *Under the Rose* (1940), a serious departure from his Welsh industrial settings and a harbinger of the new directions his writing would take in the later years of his career. As Davies departed from his "political" themes, he was, predictably, attacked in the reviews, and *Under the Rose* was singled out as a trivial and even feminine piece of fiction. Of course, to have one's fiction feminized was to be relegated to the inauspicious realm of popular middlebrow or lowbrow fiction. Davies's dread of these categories was the source of the prevalent misogyny in his writing: a misogyny, significantly, that was located firmly in *middle-class* women and resisted by Davies through an idealized, pure, and spiritually (if not politically) authentic working-class *man*.

Clearly, this analysis of Davies's relation to class is not specifically or solely interested in an economically or ideologically stable "working-class," but in classes as discursive constructs. I am interested in class as it enters into culture and is articulated in a variety of contexts and through a variety of intersecting identifications. Specifically, in the case of Davies, class is understood in its relation to nation, gender, sexuality, and most importantly, the preoccupations and anxieties of the professional writer's struggle with the market.

Little Lord Fauntleroy of the Valleys

Davies grew up rudely well-fed in a Blaenclydach that was frequently on strike. As a shopkeeper's son in the Rhondda, he was part of a community of working people, but also at one remove from it. His family was able to afford a servant and a horse and cart and were therefore "stylishly well-off in comparison to nearly all the shop's customers" (*Print of a Hare's Foot* 23). In a letter to Gilbert Fabes, he confesses that he was born a degree above the "arab class" and "was taught to look down [his] nose" at the "attractive life of the gutter" (RD to GF 18 Feb. 1930 HRHRC). Accordingly, he recalls that his status was physically marked upon him by his mother. His Sunday clothes included an Eton collar of starched linen for, "as a member of the lower middle class, [he] never wore the celluloid kind, which required no laundering" (*Print* 17). And he was forced into a "Little Lord Fauntleroy embarrassment of brown velvet tunic with a lace collar" (*Print* 17).

However removed from his community by economic circumstances, Davies was nonetheless a part of that community. The shop was a meeting place for many of the people of the valley and the affairs and lives of Blaenclydach were passed around the mouths of its customers. Indeed, the livelihood of the shop rested upon the same foundation as the livelihoods of the miners who patronized it: coal. The shop-owner does not often get into the good graces of the Anglo-Welsh novelist. Richard Llewellyn and Lewis Jones present two particularly dark portraits of them in *How Green Was My Valley* and *We Live*, respectively. They are usually seen as greedy and selfish parasites, totally unsympathetic to the plight of the miners. In *We Live*, Mr. Evans Cardi is staunchly against the miners and solely for himself and the success of his shop. Jones's grim pronouncement upon Cardi is a vivid murder-suicide, in which the shopkeeper cuts his wife's throat and hangs himself. In *How Green Was My Valley*, the shopkeeper is literally a thief who is exposed for stealing chickens, beaten, and run out of town. Davies, however, presents a different picture of his father and his shop; a picture that illustrates Davies's ambivalent identifications. He points out that throughout all the riots of the valley, his father's shop was never ransacked and credits this good fortune to his father's generosity and willingness to extend credit in times of need. In his semi-autobiographical novel, *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* (1941), the character standing in for Davies's father feels a connection to the miners: "Little capitalist though he was now, Roderick couldn't feel himself distinct and separate from the men" (27). Far from fearing the riotousness of strikers, Roderick recognizes that his fortunes and theirs are held in common: "'We've got to stick to the miners,' Roderick said. Serious for a moment, he stared out of the window in the grey autumn dusk. 'We can't live without them,' he reminded her; 'that's how it is. We got to take pot luck with them. It's no good me trying to be a lord'" (57). Davies's subsequent narration reinforces this sympathy for the shop owner and his stake in and connection to the life of the working community:

> In a strike the tradesman was a bigger loser than either the miner or the mine-owner. The miners hung idle about the place, living on credit; the owner was without profit but was not losing any of the coal in his pits. But the tradesman handed out his stock without a cash return, worked daily in his shop without a wage, and dipped into his bank-balance to pay his wholesalers, who in their remote towns saw no reason to exclude mining districts from the principles of trade. No wonder Hannah sighed, apprehending that the tradesman was the poor thwacked donkey of this commercial system. (57)

Hannah is the fictionalized version of Davies's mother and her perception of the tradesman's shared lot with the miners, though pessimistic enough here, is, at times, much more idealistic. While sternly safeguarding the family finances (like a lower middle class version of the Welsh mam), she is nonetheless rhapsodic about the place of the shop in the community: "She felt the shop was as needed as a chapel. When old customers came in with their little grubby books and asked for bread, how could she deny them? And a thin slice of ham could sooth a hungry man like a hymn" (145). Davies imagines a very harmonious relationship that almost dispels the shattering shop windows of rioting strikers.

Naturally, this sense of belonging is incomplete. If we may continue to regard *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* as analogous to at least Davies's *sense* of his place in his community, then Penry, the young writer reared in the second half the novel must figure as a Davies who was painfully aware of his state of resident exile. For instance, when Penry sneaks into the strike-time soup kitchen to have two dinners in one evening, he is caught and made to feel his difference from the other children:

> Suddenly one said: "Hoy, you're not supposed to be here, you're not poor and on strike."
> "He's cheating," glared others, their attention drawn at last. "It's Penry Bowen from that shop."
> "We *are* poor," Penry declared, belligerently.
> "No, you're not." They gazed at him as if he had an awful rash. "After our soup and pudding he is."
> He looked at them sullenly, hating their repudiation, and wanting to stay. (147)

Just as Penry is both repudiated and wanting to stay, so Davies felt both part of and excluded from the working-class community of his youth. His own class position was a conflicted one and Davies, throughout his writing, wants to identify with the culture of his youth, but is aware of the obstacles to that identification.

As we shall see later, this identification and exclusion is also a function of Davies's national identification and his sexual exclusion, the former being strongly bound up in working-class identifications and the latter being repudiated by them. In Chapter Four, I outline the ways in which Davies conflates his economic difference and his sexual difference in his identification with art. But, at this point, I will only point out that Davies's difference from his community is most fully articulated in his commitments to art, the vehicle through which he found the means to escape the valley. Davies constructs himself and several of his characters as cultivating an artistic identity in opposition to the exclusionary masculine culture of their surroundings. There are a number of visionary figures in Davies's fiction who, due to their artistic or spiritual insights, are excluded from their working-class communities: Reuben Daniels of *The Withered Root*, Davies himself in *Print of A Hare's Foot*, and, of course, Penry in *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* are three particularly good examples (Mitchell "I wish I had a Trumpet"). An earlier instance of this excluded artist figure is found in an unpublished story called "Interlude" (1929). This story is semi-autobiographical in its focus on a young writer returning from London to his home in a Welsh mining town. In this fictional retelling, the incompatibility of the mining family and the young artist mounts to a violent antipathy and recalls Davies's dismissal of the Welsh readership:

> He trembled on the verge of one of his outbursts now. Insult and abuse began to form in his mind, wrecking its former vision. Their faces poised about the dusky, crockery-littered table, were devilishly repellent to him. Yet he knew their hearts were really

> kindly disposed. But above all he hated them to allude to his book. The few things of his that were published had been so resolutely and grotesquely criticized by them, their uncouth conventions pawing them about that he could not bear now to listen to the slightest mention of his writings. He set his lips, his heart throbbed, he looked before him dimly. What did it matter? He must just go away. Nothing mattered but his own intense flame of creation. (SL V 54 vii 6-7)

The "flame of creation" burns in spite of his dull and insensitive surroundings, and the young writer is offended by the inability of his family to understand his work. They are not his readers; they are not who he writes for: So, too, for Davies. When Davies writes *of* working-class Wales, he is not writing *for* working-class Wales. What we see in "Interlude," therefore, is an unambiguous conflict between an ideal art and the forms of working-class life that comprised so much of Davies's writing

Classing Off: The Welsh Industrial Novelist

It is not surprising that Davies was so easily misrecognized as a writer of the working classes despite the obviously bourgeois sensibilities informing his representations. As Stephen Knight points out, *The Withered Root* (1927), *Rings on Her Fingers* (1930), *Count Your Blessings* (1932), and the Glan Ystrad trilogy of *Honey and Bread* (1935), *A Time to Laugh* (1937) and *Jubilee Blues* (1938), had all been published by 1938. To put this in context, "Davies had produced three industrial novels before Jack Jones had published one, and produced six before Lewis Jones had published his second" (57). It can be argued that, in the 1930s, Davies was the foremost writer of the Welsh industrial experience. He was the first in what would soon amount to a more or less stable body of writers interpreting this new Welsh experience in the pages of novels.

Raymond Williams identified what he describes as "the Welsh industrial novel" in the inaugural Gwyn Jones lecture in 1978. According to Williams, the Welsh industrial novel was something that could not have emerged without the influence of several historical and cultural forces. Williams contrasts the Welsh industrial novel (which appeared comparatively late in relation to England) with such earlier English novels depicting the industrial experience as Disraeli's *Sybil*, Dickens' *Hard Times*, or Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. The difference between these novels and the later Welsh industrial novels is that, unlike their nineteenth-century English middle-class counterparts, the Welsh industrial novelists wrote from *inside* the working communities they represented. The novel, Williams argues, was slow to appear in Wales because prose and the appropriate realist forms were much less central to the Welsh language literary traditions. Nor did Wales have the large middle-class population of England and the consequent wealth of motivated middle-class observers (218). That first generation of Welsh industrial novelists did not emerge until the diversified and Anglicized industrial valleys of the twentieth century produced the first generation of children raised with English as their first or only language.

Emerging from industrialism, these writers were also speaking out of largely working-class communities for whom the structures of the middle-class novel were inadequate to the interpretation of their experience. As Williams puts it, the "received conventional plots—the propertied marriage and settlement; the intricacies of inheritance; the exotic adventure; the abstracted romance—are all, for obvious reasons, at a distance from working-class life" (219). This distance, claims Williams, is the reason for the appropriateness of autobiography for the representation of working-class life, B. L. Coombes's *These Poor Hands* (1937) being the best Welsh example. The true Welsh industrial novel, therefore, is not a novel that has Wales and industry as a background for themes and values that are largely independent from them, but a novel that is a function of a determinate material context:

> Thus industrial work, and its characteristic places and communities, are not just a new background: a new 'setting' for a story. In the true industrial novel they are seen as formative. Social relations are not assumed, are not static, are not conventions within which the tale of marriage or an inheritance or an adventure can go its own way. The working society—actual work, actual relations, an actual and visibly altered place—is in the industrial novel central: not because, or not necessarily because, the writer is 'more interested in sociology than people'—which is what a degraded establishment criticism would have us believe—but because in these working communities it is a trivial fantasy to suppose that these general and pressing conditions are for long or even at all separable from the immediate and the personal. (222)

Williams's observations come from a recognition of that first generation of specifically working-class Welsh novelists who were searching for the appropriate realist and naturalist form for dealing with the material realities of their existence. They were trying to come to terms with the ways in which industrialism had ended one whole way of life and created a new one in its place.

And it is here, in the rapid transformation of South Wales and in the recent proximity of a radically different past, that Williams makes room for a distinctively *Welsh* industrial novel. He distinguishes the Welsh industrial novelists from more generalized industrial experience by pointing out the definitive specificities of place and their concomitant historical and memorial, though no less contemporary, import. Here Williams discusses, for instance, the importance of the mountain in industrial Welsh consciousness and literature:

> The pastoral life, which had been Welsh history, is still another Welsh present, and in its visible presence—*not as an ideal contrast*, but as the slope, the skyline, to be seen immediately from the streets and from the pit-tops—it is a shape that manifests not only a consciousness of history but a consciousness of alternatives, and then, in a modern form, a consciousness of aspirations and possibilities. The traditional basic contrasts of darkness and light, of being trapped and of getting clear, are here on the ground in the most specific ways, and are the deepest basic movement of all this writing. (italics added 223)

The important observation is that the mountain and its potentially memorial nature are not ideal contrasts, nor escapes or elisions of the working community. On the contrary, they are a dependant alternative underlining the present working conditions—valleys and mountains are not only impossible to separate, they define each other—each constitutive in the other's existence. So too with the working realities of the present and the living memories of another life. Here we see those apparently oppositional chronotopes discussed earlier brought into unison. I think Williams is right in noting the presence of the past in the Welsh novelists. Even Lewis Jones' communist *Cwmardy* (1937) opens with a father and son on the mountain and memories of the glorious and bloody ancient Welsh past of Cadwaladr, and we often find the Welsh working-class novelist mingling labour revolt with a Romantic Welsh past, confusing the economic with the national or, even a neocolonial servile exoticism.

The idea of a "Welsh Industrial Novel," therefore, sets up a troubling question for Welsh history and literature in general and for Davies in particular. Can South Wales be separated from its largely working-class experience? South Wales was in fact a nationally diverse community. Not all of its members identified as Welsh, though most would have identified as workers. Yet, overwhelmingly, Welsh writers were expected to write of the working class even as they tried to write distinctively Welsh novels. At the height of the Welsh industrial novel's popularity, Glyn Jones was able to write of "those proletarian novels that seem rapidly to be turning industrial South Wales into the newest literary region" (154). Jones further complained that no one could "become an adequate interpreter of the Valley's scene who [did] not share the political aspirations of the miners themselves" for you "cannot portray the life of this vital and tragic community in the gentlemanly English of superior Sunday Journalism" (154-155). It is as though when readers and reviewers and publishers weren't crying, "Give us Wales, but make it green and romantic," they were demanding, "Give us Wales, but make it black with coal." Often they were given both at the same time.

When Davies wrote of South Wales mining communities, the greatest expectation was for the authenticity of the insider. Davies was often granted this authenticity simply because he was a Welsh writer. As far as many of his critics and reviews were concerned, Davies was a Rhondda boy and that was that: He was raised for riots and had coal-dust in his veins. But, as a shop-owner's son who had only been down in the mines once, and even then as an observer rather than a worker, there were limits to that authenticity. Of course, many other South Wales novelists were not workers. Glyn Jones and Gwyn Jones became university professors, and Gwyn Thomas was a teacher. But all of these men grew up in working-class families. Both Lewis Jones and Jack Jones were working men before they became involved in politics and eventually became writers. Only B. L. Coombes remained a miner following the success of his first novel, *These Poor Hands*, and from this position he preached the doctrine of working-class authenticity loudly. In a BBC broadcast of 1947 his words read almost as a criticism of the expatriate Davies:

> If you, a working-class writer, leave the valleys and live for one year away from them…their lives and their thoughts will fade from among your closest memories, and in that interval many fresh problems will have arisen, which you know nothing about. Many a working-class writer has been ruined by going away from the only life he knows anything about, and trying to live on his mental capital. You won't catch me leaving my valley. (qtd. in Jones and Williams 61)

I find it interesting that Coombes specifies "the valleys" in place of any more generalized working-class context, perhaps unwittingly conflating his Welsh and working-class identities. Regardless, Coombes defends exactly that insider authenticity that many saw as the working-class writer's only true claim to publication.

Concomitantly, a writer's commitment to art was often regarded as suspect and, if not secondary to political action, then totally at odds with it, and perhaps even tainted with establishment privilege. Working-class writers were praised for the lack of "artistic" merit perceived in their work. For instance, listen to the language of this tribute to Lewis Jones, who was, incidentally, another Blaenclydach boy and a contemporary of Davies's, written shortly after Jones' death in 1939. Jones, it is contended, was not an artist but an activist whose "writing was only one of many modes of political activity simultaneously exercised" (Garman 264). He "was concerned much less with self-expression than with creating in his readers the will to act" (Garman 264). His novels were "firmly rooted in the life of a community" and were "necessarily social to the extent that everyone's life is affected by, and almost all are dominated by, the pit" (Garman 265). Lewis Jones's *Cymardy* (1937) and *We Live* (1939) are among the most clearly proletarian novels written at the time. Next to him, Davies is far from a working-class author. Yet, largely due to his Welsh subject, Davies is frequently lumped into the same category and spoken of in the same terms. Davies's fiction has "an attitude of greater humanity, and…a realisation that the common problems of mankind, taken in the mass, are not sexual, but simply economic" (back flap of *Under the Rose*). Or it "exhibits a loose pattern of history as determined by the economic factor" and, with a "naturalness of style" describes the life of a community

> which draws its livelihood from the…colliery…, of lavish feeding in days of prosperity, of faggots-and-peas nights in harder times, of Saturday nights in the pub and the demand for tinned peaches, of football, chapel, strikes and Socialism, the imaginative emphasis is on the fortunes of the coal industry and upon the money value of our civilization generally. ("Hard Times" 529)

This review praises a democratic and demotic writer who is sensitive to the economic base of social life. The reviewer's list demonstrates his pleasure with the documentary sweep he perceives in *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*. And in the review as a whole one does not get the sense of a plot so much as of a place and its people both of which, we are assured, Davies is more than qualified to present to us, his readers.

For many, Davies succeeded in living up to their political expectations. As a writer of the working classes he was required to be deeply committed to the cause of labour and to write with the authentic, spare, unadorned voice of the worker rather than the "artifice" of the artist. When V. S. Pritchett referred *A Time to Laugh* (1937) among five novels reviewed under the title "Political Novels," he described one author as "deeply, gravely committed" (428), and Davies himself as "out in the streets when the windows smash" (428). The *TLS* review of the sequel to *A Time to Laugh*, *Jubilee Blues* (1938), takes a similar tack, extolling Davies's commitment to the history he describes and his knowledge of the living voice of the people:

> Every type and circumstance come into the picture—the talkers and the silent, the man on short-time who reads Spinoza, the boy taken away from grammar school to replace his father in the pit, the half-bankrupt tradespeople, the grim or grizzling women. There is a doctor who has thrown in his lot with the colliers; there is the restless fury of his schoolmaster son, thwarted in love by a code of gentility he despises. ("Woman of Wales" 659)

As *Jubilee Blues* focuses on the proprietors of a pub, the principal setting allows for the life of a community to pass through the narrative, and this reviewer is keenly aware of this novel's depiction of the living, working community and its ability to confront the reader with "problems that the conscience cannot ignore" ("Woman of Wales" 659). In keeping with his representation of the people, Davies's writing is regarded as imbued with the same honest simplicity of an idealized working class voice: "It is not altogether a polished piece of work—Mr. Davies has almost too swift and flowing an imagination for that—and here and there his gusto gets the better of his judgment. But it has a liveliness and humanity such as few of our younger novelists exhibit and without which all the literary polish in the world is of small account" ("Woman of Wales" 659). The authenticity of Davies's writing is partly due to his lack of "polish" which would only interfere, presumably, with the "humanity" he represents.

Hunting the Highbrows

So, what sorts of expectations might Davies have felt as a writer of the Welsh working-class, and how could he maintain his artistic integrity and authenticity while capitalizing upon the demand for politicized fiction? We know from Chapter One that Davies worked very hard to construct himself as a "highbrow" writer; this identification was not always consistent with working-class and politically committed writing. Davies's reading of and contributions to such magazines as *Life and Letters Today*, *New Writing*, and *The Tribune* suggest that he was aware of the debates carried out within their pages and could not have helped but position himself in this discussion, particularly in regard to the relationship between art as an idealized and transcendent quality versus more politically "grounded" literary work. As a Welsh writer, Davies could be a parochial writer of quaint and exotic Wales or a working-class writer; but then as a working-class writer was he merely a reporter whose merit was that his writing was shorn of craft and "artifice"?

In a review of *New Writing* in *Life and Letters Today* (and Davies worked as a reviewer in both of these magazines), Davies's fellow *Progressive Bookshop* denizen, Julian Symons, saw little room to be shared by "highbrow" leftist writing *and* working-class writers:

> Highbrow red and working-class red are not the same colour; this is not to say anything against either, simply that they should not live together…Anything "Left" has been included; highbrows, who will like the stories by Isherwood and Jan Peterson, the "legends" (pretentious word) by Paul Nizam and Robert Waller, the poems by Kenneth Allott and R. B. Fuller, will not also like the more "genuine" working-class stories and poems. (192)

Symons did not see the need to list the "genuine" working-class writers as exhaustively as he has the "highbrow" ones, but perhaps that is because he does not regard *New Writing* as serving a working-class readership: "There is enough force in the literary Left to ensure that *New Writing* is…worth buying—for highbrows: but if Mr. Lehmann really wants the politically-conscious working class to read it (as I'm not sure he does) it should be published at three and sixpence in paper covers" (192). The weekly socialist paper, *The Tribune*, is more appropriately priced for a working-class readership at 7s 6d for a three month subscription, and here too we are asked to consider how the highbrow writer relates to the Left. George Orwell's "Literature and the Left" states that if "you consult any sporting manual or year book you will find many pages devoted to the hunting of the fox and the hare, and not a word devoted to the hunting of the highbrow. Yet this, more than any other, is the characteristic British sport, in season all the year round and enjoyed by the rich and poor alike" (19). Orwell complains that "highbrow" literature is condemned regardless of its merit due to the supposed political corruption of its authors, and he fears that the Left may alienate the "bourgeois intellectual." A stronger defence of the highbrow writer is found in Virginia Woolf's essay "The Leaning Tower" in *New Writing* of Autumn 1940, which contends that the distinction and excellence of the educated writer remains privileged no matter how far they may lean to the Left. Davies, who published stories in both *The Tribune* and *Life and Letters Today*, and who wrote reviews for *Life and Letters Today*, knew that while "highbrow" did not necessarily mean apolitical, it also did not mean "working class" and he surely felt the divide between his "highbrow" identification and the working class authenticity he was sometimes burdened with. That is to say, a working-class writer, while authentic in his own way, could generally not also think of himself as an authentic "highbrow" writer.

One of Davies's reference points for working out this conflict was likely Virginia Woolf's essay, "Middlebrow" from *The Death of a Moth and Other Essays*, which he read when it was published in 1942. We know that Davies admired Woolf's essays. He describes them generally as "superb" (RD to RM First Sunday After Easter 1941 NLW MS 20897 E 52), and *Death of a Moth and Other Essays* in particular as living up to that standard (RD and RM 25 July 1942 NLW MS 20897 E 59). In "Middlebrow," Woolf sets the terms for what has been, and continues to be after 1942, Davies's conception of his readership and how it relates to his representation of class. While Davies does try to live up to a kind of working-class authenticity and realism, he ultimately resists a naturalist representation of a politically motivated *class* by creating an idealized working man to operate in opposition to a homogenous middlebrow *mass* that comes uncomfortably close to being his readership. Similarly, Woolf imagines a harmonious relationship between the highbrow artist and the lowbrow population; a continuity that is partly dependant upon her loathing of the middlebrow consumer. Woolf confirms the highbrow's unconcern for things material, claiming that they, "for some reason or another, are wholly incapable of dealing successfully with what is called real life" (153), and admires an animalistic spontaneity in the true-living lowbrow who is "a man or woman of thoroughbred vitality who rides his body in pursuit of a living at a gallop across life" (153). Middlebrows, on the other hand, constitute a dangerously tasteless consuming mass with no trace of authenticity or vitality:

> When the middlebrows, on the contrary, have earned enough to live on, they go on earning enough to buy—what are the things the middlebrows always buy? Queen Anne furniture (faked but not the less expensive); first editions of dead writers—always the worst; pictures, or reproductions from pictures, by dead painters; houses in what is called 'the Georgian style'—but never anything new, never a picture by a living painter, or books by living writers, for to buy living art requires living taste. (158)

And a book written by a middlebrow "is not well written; nor is it badly written. It is not proper, nor is it improper—in short it is betwixt and between" (156). Of course, being regarded as a writer for this consuming mass is part of Davies's professional anxiety. He resists his consumption as a commodity in the name of highbrow art. Consequently, Davies does not imagine his readers, for instance, as the conventional, complacent and tasteless middle-class readership represented in his story, "Doris in Gomorrah" (1933), as the "respectably" married sado-masochistic and pedophilic publisher who "made spectacular sums of money on tasteless books that the public could respect as safely as the tapioca puddings they resembled" (224). In opposition to this tasteless mass fiction, Davies imagined a vitality of art free from mass produced tastes, and a vitality of life located in an idealized working class. Though the first notion was located in a highbrow, or leisure class, authenticity and the second in a working class authenticity, both grew out of and fed back into Davies's professional anxieties: they were part of his need to define his work and his readership in opposition to the market in which they operated. The discourse in which Davies imagined his writing, and its paradoxical dependence upon the mechanisms of literary circulation, is nicely summed up in C. Day Lewis's review of *A Trip to London* (1946), which, as mentioned above, was reproduced on some of the dust jackets of Davies's novels:

> It is a nice change from the contemporary short-story manner, which turns out all those delicately-painted still-life studies—still indeed, but so often not alive. Vitality, speed, exuberance—these are the qualities of the tales in *The Trip to London*. They are qualities which may degenerate into the slickness of the machine-made magazine short story: but with Mr. Rhys Davies, they seldom do: for the Welsh turbulence of spirit, the exaggeration, the darts

> into fantasy, the slyness and obliqueness…all these help to create a personal style not to be imitated by the mass-fiction factories. (Dust jacket *Perishable Quality*)

Day Lewis praises (and Heinemann advertises) an artistic vitality that is also a *Welsh* vitality that recalls Woolf's resistance to middlebrow mediocrity through lowbrow "thoroughbred vitality." As a Welsh writer, Davies was expected to be a working-class one, and he was often received in terms of working-class authenticity. Ultimately, however, he cultivated a highbrow distance from the working classes that he represented, and constructed within them an idealized authenticity that resisted the middlebrow reading mass and validated his claims to artistic distinction.

"The Raw Stuff of Life": Art and the Working-Class

As we know, Davies had difficulty reconciling himself to the working-community that he fled in the name of art and which features so dominantly in his fiction. Often, however, he cultivated his reception and production as a writer of the proletariat. In an early feature on Davies in *The Western Mail* he characterized himself as a sympathetic advocate of the working classes:

> I have been brought to task for my apparent 'cruelty' to the working classes, but that is the last thing I would wish to be, for my sympathy with the Welsh proletariat is very real and very deep. I do feel, however, that there are in Wales phases of life and types of humanity so raw and crude that if one writes of them with sincerity, one might easily appear to be cruel. ("Crude Phases of Welsh Life")

Davies suggests that the "rawness" of life in Wales transcends any intent he may have had as a writer; that his craft is secondary to and determined by his subject. It would seem that such a "raw" and true existence is opposed to over-cultivated notions of art and culture. This contrast persists well into Davies's career. While writing *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* (1941), Davies returned to Blaenclydach as he claimed that "living [there was] a great aid to collecting material" for the novel (RD to LQ 18 Jan. 1941 NLW MS 23106 E 7). While there, he writes to Marriott describing his return to Blaenclydach and his representation of its working community as his access to that same "raw" authenticity:

> About six or seven years ago I turned my back on the 'artistic' crowd in fear—not that some virtue or vitality is entirely absent from them, but because their world is too enclosed and parasitic. One wants to get back to the raw stuff of life. It is down here, though even here it's more impure than it used to be. (Or is this

> because, corrupted, I cannot detect it so keenly now?). By 'raw stuff of life' I mean the original simplicity in man, that primal glow in him which gives him meaning in a blind world. (RD to RM First Sunday After Easter 1941 NLW MS 20897 52)

I have quoted a smaller part of this passage in Chapter One and it gains a greater nuance here. In this instance, Davies disassociates with art to shore up authenticity in "the raw stuff of life." But this positioning of himself and his subject contradicts his semi-autobiographical self, Penry's, increasing artistic separation from his community in *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*. Not that this should bother us: It is precisely in such contradictions that Davies's anxieties appear most clearly. So, echoing Davies's letter to Marriott, the Penry who leaves for London to become a writer is also the Penry who, like Davies, looks upon the working community of his home town as proud and noble: "These dark rigid rows of stone houses, they too contained richnesses. Here too life spilled its wild purple. In these squalid houses were dealings with *the raw stuff of life*, here were the eternal hungers" (*Tomorrow* 194 italics added). Here, presumably, where the "eternal hungers" bring one closer to true living, one escapes such artificial worlds as those of bohemian pretension.

Yet this ostensible sympathy with the working class is only superficially opposed to the idealized art to which Davies and Penry aspire. Davies's working class is in fact perfectly contiguous with the artistic Davies. Davies's class "sympathies" work within largely conventional novelistic structures, and his working class resolves into a safe product of an individual, often creative, or artistic mind. The revolutionary doctor of *A Time to Laugh* is a particularly strong proof that Davies did not adapt the novel to the "authentic" working-class expression that some of his reviewers saw in this work. Dr. Tudor Morris, who identifies with the workers rather than his own middle class, is not simply representative, as one reviewer claimed, of "a problem which many are facing [in the thirties]" (Edwards 157), he is, rather, the vantage point from which a deeply personal narrative is told, closely associated with Davies's own artistic act:

> In quiet remote moments he wondered if he was using the valley as a painter takes a canvas when he is stirred by a landscape and repeats it, charged with the colours of his own temperament, on the cloth. This act of creation was being performed with his own soul for canvas. He was painting there the sacred lineaments of the place and the groups of its oppressed damaged people. And in some way the vision had to be displayed, if only from the back of a rickety brake: he had to bring it forth, else suffer a kind of death, a spiritual suffocation. (251)

A Time to Laugh is told from the singular and privileged voice of the middle-class observer. Tudor's personal conflict and journey are set against a *background* of strikes and riots, and his reflections sound more like the familiar voice of Davies the artist's need to create. The novel in fact occupies the discursive realm of individual artistic creation rather than the political motivation of a class. For Davies, "the raw stuff of life," as he calls it, is little more than the raw material from which he moulds a relationship to class that that addresses his anxieties as a professional writer.

Corresponding with Culture: Rhys Davies and G. H. Wells

The more general conflict between art and politics within which I have tried to place Davies is more immediately discernable in his personal relationship and correspondence with G. H. Wells, a reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement*. The *TLS* was a cultural arbiter whose authority Davies took for granted. We have already heard Davies speak of "the calm canons prevailing…in *The Times Literary Supplement*" (*My Wales* 209). Similarly, in 1928, he writes to Lahr lamenting that he cannot find the *TLS* in Nice: "I can't get the 'Lit Suple' here now. I had it once, but it seems they only get occasional copies so don't throw your copy away, if you don't want it. I haven't O'Flaherty's sublime contempt (Oh! those Irish.) for it. I've learned a lot from it" (RD to CL undated 1928 SL V 36 iii). He continues to set store by the *TLS* in later years. Unlike many of Davies's reviewers, Wells did not commend Davies for his working-class stories, but thought that he consistently fell short of a truly committed narrative. Wells reviewed much of Davies's writing and read a number of Davies's novels in manuscript, including the Glan Ystrad trilogy, which is Davies's most complete expression of the industrial experience of Wales. In his correspondence with Wells, Davies consistently struggled with the appropriateness of his modes of representation to his working-class themes. Wells and Davies debate Davies's writing over a period of six years and in the process Davies appears as divided along boundaries of "politics" and "art" as he is along boundaries of "the market" and "art."

To review, the Glan Ystrad trilogy maps the history of a coal-mining valley from its bucolic preindustrial beginnings, to the sinking of the first mines in *Honey and Bread* (1935), to the labour struggles in the last year of the nineteenth century in *A Time to Laugh* (1937), and culminating in the events leading up to and including the Depression in *Jubilee Blues* (1938). As we have seen, *Honey and Bread* focuses on the lives of a landowning family, the Llewellyns, as the old pastoral way of life passes to the new and unfamiliar industrial way of life in the middle of the nineteenth century. Owen, the oldest of two sons, is a tubercular esthete who resists the loss of his home and, despite his Romantic attempts to preserve it (in the arms of an earthy country girl) the pits are sunk, the labour of the land changes, and he appropriately dies along with his pastoral home. *A Time* *to Laugh* picks up the story of the valley two generations later at the close of the nineteenth century when Owen's grandson, a doctor in the district, decides to fly in the face of his class and throw in his lot with the workers. The valley is fully industrial now and the narrative follows the miners' early struggles against the mine owners. This novel moves away from the Romanticism of *Honey and Bread* and achieves a greater historical realism, abstracted though the events may be from several labour revolts (Dixon 45). The final novel in the series, *Jubilee Blues*, takes us into the 1920s, through the General Strike, and into the depression. It is told largely from the location of Cassie's and her profligate husband, Prosser's, pub, which is situated near one of the valley's two mines. The story is one of unstinted degradation, concluding in Cassie's flight back to the rural securities of her native Carmarthen, and back, as it were, to something of the pastoral ideal lost in *Honey and Bread*. As a whole, the series is elegiac. It moves toward *resolution* rather than *revolution* and traces, in the later struggles of the miners, the lineage of the former glory of Wales.

Still, the Glan Ystrad trilogy may be read largely as Davies's attempt to live up to Well's expectations. Davies's letters to Wells reveal him in the process of expressing a more committed political statement: of striving toward a narrative of sociological significance. However, these letters also reveal him in conflict with that goal, realizing that his preferred modes of expression tend toward the individual rather than the social, the personal and passionate rather than the political and revolutionary. This conflict is also between the expectations of the sociological novel and Davies's personal relationship to his writing. When Wells criticized Davies and his *The Red Hills* for turning "rather too readily to his hero and heroine as seen in isolation, in hillside detachment, from their environment" (960), Davies wrote back to complain of Wells' designs upon Davies's writing:

> I see you are still pining for me to produce a thousand page novel, complete with every damned detail down to the lump of soap in the kitchen and the pattern of the linoleum under the beds. Can't you see that my characters' environment is intrinsic in their behaviour, their conversation, their thoughts, in a given situation and set of circumstances such as in the "Red Hills"? I can't help it if the Times and publishers call it a novel and charge 7/6 for it. Fiction seems to me a matter of concentration, and the more successfully it's done (in degree of concentration, I mean) the better the artist. I'd rather pay 7/6 for the 30 pages of Maupassant's "Miss Harriet" or Tchekhov's "The Bishop" than for the "Old Wives Tales" or "Anna Karenina"...Of course I don't see myself on a level with these people, but the above are my aims and beliefs. I never felt myself bowing and prostrate before size and bulk: in fact I've always been suspicious as to the imaginative capability of its producer. (RD to GHW 25 Nov. 1932 HRHRC)

Wells apparently wants a naturalist style, and one cannot help but wonder (especially in light of letters and reviews to be considered in a moment) that this desire is the result of Davies's Welsh working-class subject. Davies, however, obviously resists Wells, claiming the artist's autonomy and privileging the short story as the more artistic medium by virtue of both its tendency toward lyricism rather than reportage, and its unmarketability. He resists Wells as part of an apparatus that has designs upon what sort of novel he should write.

The novel that Davies does *not* want to write about Wales (or, more specifically, about the Rhondda) is evident in his reaction to Jack Jones' *Rhondda Roundabout* (1934):

> I had been looking forward to reading "Rhondda Roundabout". It begins with a rather attractive flourish and sweep. But I had to make an effort to get through it. It's good reporting, and makes a cheap afternoon excursion to the Rhondda for people. But reporting is not enough to make a real novel. Jones' version is limited: he reports what he's seen of today's behaviour and throws it down loosely and carelessly. There's no background or pattern to this book, though there's a vague and hazy attempt to show courage in adversity. The love-affair is naïve to the point of fatuity. All that's worth while in the book are the lively journalistic descriptions of political meetings—typical of anywhere in England—and one or two characters obviously described flatly from life—but without that edition to them which is the creative writer's business. Jones seems to have not the least amount of imagination to aid him. I'm disappointed. It would have been nice to have a fellow-writer sit beside me: I feel lonely about Wales sometimes! (RD to CL undated SL V 36 xv 26-2)

I wonder how much of Davies's reaction to *Rhondda Roundabout* was influenced by the frustration he must have felt at seeing this Rhondda novel appear from the lists of Faber and Faber while he had been writing of Wales in relative obscurity for the past eight years (similar to the frustration he must have felt again in 1939 when *How Green Was My Valley* became an international best-seller). Nonetheless, Davies clearly articulates what he expects the novel to be: the novel is not merely documentary, nor is it to be reduced to the reportage of newspaper slickness. The novel, rather, is an artistic responsibility. Essentially, Davies resisted the novel of materialist determination in favour of a very traditional novel of individual passions (traditional despite his denial of *The Red Hills* as a novel in anything more than name—and price).

However, two years before the appearance of *Rhondda Roundabout*, Davies is beginning to conceive what would become the Glan Ystrad trilogy, and to conceive of it as something along the lines of Wells' desire for a "thousand page novel." In response to Well's reaction to *Count Your Blessings*, Davies is familiarly resistant to Wells, but he ends on a note of appeasement as he anticipates writing the trilogy:

FIGURE 12: FRONT COVER OF DUST JACKET OF JACK JONES' *RHONDDA ROUNDABOUT* (1934). THE COVER ART NICELY ILLUSTRATES THE DOCUMENTARY SWEEP OF THE NOVEL AND THE CENTRALITY OF INDUSTRY, COAL AND WORK OVER PEOPLE.

> I know your craving for larger and more detailed backgrounds, your sociological passion. But surely the background of the valley is definite enough. I try to make the reader see it through Blodwen's eyes—the background of inhuman squalor—and through her own passion of revolt. You would have me describe it from outside: individuals as details in the general building up of this society here. It's simply a personal preference, I suppose, and yours perhaps is the larger way. But individuals from the inside

> attract me more than creating fabrics of society. However, I am turning over in my mind a larger novel describing the beginning, rise and fall of this community here [Blaenclydach]. (RD to GHW 9 Mar. 1932 HRHRC)

Davies conceives of the Glan Ystrad trilogy (1107 pages, all told) as a narrative that is greater than the individuals within it; as a "building up of a society" across time and generations; as a depiction of the movements of history rather than the movements of the human heart. To be sure, when *Honey and Bread*, the least industrial of the trilogy, appears, Davies is concerned that it was not read in the context of the larger narrative of the series:

> There seems to be a slight murmur of critical surprise that I've produced a "pleasant" novel, with "charm" in it. (I don't see it's wrong to coo like a dove sometimes, as long as one doesn't always do it). But, of course, when I wrote most of "Honey and Bread" I never intended it to come out on it's [sic] own. There was to be a contrast in later sections of the raw, the clamourous and the "unpleasant". I suppose I have a bias in favour of the "Honey and Bread" kind of life (though this is futile, perhaps) and that was why it came out like a simple Mozartian melody (vanity?) instead of the growls and barking people seem to expect of me as a Welsh novelist.
>
> However, people had to judge "Honey and Bread" as it stood, so I can't complain (and I am not). Perhaps one day, with luck, the three parts will be published together. (RD to GHW 3 May 1935 HRHRC)

Davies had a sense of what the public, publishers, and critics expected of him as a Welsh novelist: perhaps, what they had just had from Jack Jones in *Rhondda Roundabout*. And although he preferred the "Mozartian melody" of *Honey and Bread*, it was to be an elegiac melody whose true final notes were not to be struck until the altogether darker and "raw" succeeding novels. It was, that is, to recede into its appropriately larger historical structure. But, as Davies himself admits, *Honey and Bread* is more a novel of "charm" than of political motive, and it did not achieve what Wells expected of Davies "as a Welsh novelist." Of course, this is partly due to the fact that *Honey and Bread* did achieve the quaint and exotic Wales that others expected of him, again, as a Welsh novelist, but one of a different sort.

So it is not surprising that Wells is still unimpressed with Davies after *Honey and Bread*, and that Davies still needs to impress Wells. When Wells criticizes the stories of *The Things Men Do* (1936) as depicting a "world of men and women caught within the prisons of their own imaginative limitations," most of which "are merely incidents, neither very deeply nor very urgently felt nor carrying more than their immediate significance" (562), Davies exhibits his characteristic need to appease: "I think our conception of imaginative literature may be different. You want social implications and backgrounds all the time (at least from me) and while I agree this is an important part of literature, I don't see why a writer shouldn't concern himself too with stories that "don't look beyond themselves"—personal little conflicts and idiosyncrasies seem also material to me" (RD to GHW 7 July 1936 HRHRC). However, Davies does capitulate to Wells' materialist expectations when, later in the same letter, he asks Wells to read the manuscript of *A Time to Laugh*: "And as punishment for these reviews I'm going to demand that you read my new novel (not yet completed). In it I hope you'll find all the social implications and intensity you need." Davies is clearly trying to appease Wells as critic rather than Wells as friend—trying, after four years of debate on the issue, to meet his expectations. When Wells does read *A Time to Laugh*, Davies's political intentions are very clear; his commitment is to labour and, to a degree, the novel's form seeks to emulate this commitment:

> I am relieved to think you had pleasure out of the book—you are the only person who has read it so far, beyond Heinemann, who say "it is by far the best thing I've done", and seem anxious to do their best for it.... But I am rather worried about that "general air of defeatedness prevailing over the social rather than the personal part of the book." I certainly didn't intend such an air to prevail...My intention was to make labour feel its power and with it assurance—even though the men in S. Wales at that period were defeated in their struggle again and again, gaining only small fractions. The only explanation I can think of is that perhaps I was subconsciously influenced by knowledge of conditions there now and thus felt a sense of futility. (RD to GHW 5 Nov 1936 HRHRC)

Davies claims to have written the novel with a commitment to the proletariat as a mass and a movement over time, and, as he explains later in the same letter, he sought a form that moved away from the traditional bourgeois novel that privileged the middle-class individual's passage through narrative. In response to Wells' seemingly inconsistent criticism that Dr. Tudor Morris fades from the narrative from time to time, Davies explains that he was attempting to provide a picture that went beyond Tudor's individual experience: "Beyond Tudor and the other characters, I wanted to give a general broken up picture of the life of a community. There are various sub chapter sections where he and the others don't disappear at all" (RD to GHW 5 Nov. 1936 HRHRC).

This self-consciousness regarding the form and content in Davies's most complete depiction of the history and economic development in South Wales continues into the third novel of the series, *Jubilee Blues*, even approaching the style that he loathed so much in Jack Jones' *Rhondda Roundabout*. He writes to Wells,

> I realize the slowness of the first 100 or so pages—due, I think, to the swerving away from the personal development of Cassie and Prosser as a married couple to mere "reporting" of the General Strike and its effects on a community, and the other happenings that do not arise from the actions of one's characters. It's terribly difficult to incorporate social matters and mass affairs into an imaginative work; and the intrusion of fact seems to deaden one's faculties. However, no doubt there is a way of achieving this blend successfully—undiscovered by me, as yet. (RD to GHW 31 Aug. 1938. HRHRC)

So Davies was trying to write something quite different from what he was used to; trying to conceive of a story in a manner unfamiliar to him but supposedly called for by the times (or was it *The Times*?).

This dialogue with Wells demonstrates Davies's interaction with his critical culture and accounts for much of the tension between form and content in his fiction. He was not simply writing out his personal relationship to class, but is in important ways a product of his context, an instancing of the anxieties of his place and time, and a representative of the vicissitudes of a culture of book production and the anxieties of the professional writer. Davies clearly sought to meet Wells' expectations and it is no coincidence that Wells was a reviewer, a man who wrote critical work for a paper whose authority and cultural claims Davies respected and for the most part took for granted. In his personal correspondence with Wells, Davies is in fact corresponding with (or seeking to correspond to) what he regards as the expectations and tastes of "the public."

Under the Shadow of the Rose: From Manly Politics to Female Passion

By the end of the thirties, Davies was tiring of the themes that his name was by now recognizable for, and in 1940 he published a novel, *Under the Rose*, that was a departure from his "working-class" novels. With *Under the Rose* Davies stopped "corresponding" with the working-class themes he felt obliged to write of as a Welshman, and wrote a novel that disappointed many reviewers. The resulting discussion surrounding the novel reveals not just the expectations of Davies's public, but establishes *Under the Rose* as a turning point in Davies's fiction, and as a catalyst that brings to light one of the central anxieties of Davies's entire career. *Under the Rose* is the first most obvious instance of Davies's feminization, of his dismissal as a women's writer. This dismissal feeds directly into Davies's conception of his relationship to his public and is a central factor in his gendering of classes as they correspond to his construction of his readership.

Under the Rose, while set in Wales, takes place in a rural fastness and revolves around the thwarted passions of a spinster, Rachel Lloyd, a descendant of one of the old families of the county. The novel opens with the return of Rachel's girlhood lover, Stephen Meredith, who had abandoned her on the eve of their wedding. She murders him with a bread knife in her parlour and buries him in the garden beneath her prize-winning roses. The rest of the novel follows Rachel as she tries in vain to recapture her lost youth. When Stephen's city lover traces him to Rachel's house, she guesses Rachel's crime and blackmails her. The novel ends with Rachel's eventual madness, and she jumps to her death from a mountain height. In its background and primary themes, this was not the Wales that people had come to expect from Davies. It did not have those "grumblings" of *A Time to Laugh* and *Jubilee Blues*, or even the dark historical prophesies of *Honey and Bread*. When the first reviews appeared, Davies felt that he was being told to keep in his place, and wrote as much to Raymond Marriott:

> Yes, "Under the Rose" bloomed last Monday—but so far only its thorn has been evident. Did you see yesterday [sic] "Observer", or the "Times Lit. Supp"? Such rebuke! It seems that it's not for me to deal in dark murders. This is what one gets for exploring new avenues?
>
> Should think most of the reviews will now be along these lines of reproof. Five years ago, should be horribly depressed about it. Now I just say "Well, well"—a little haughtily. (RD to RM 23 Sept. 1940 NLW MS 20897 E 48)

"Five years ago," Davies had not yet secured Heinemann for his publisher, but I do not think that he is as immune to the opinions of reviewers as he suggests. Certainly, the past six years of debate with G. H. Wells suggest otherwise. When he next writes to Marriott, he sounds relieved that the next batch of reviews are much better. Despite his protestation of indifference to the judgments of reviewers, he is quite sensitive to the relative influence of his various reviews. It also becomes even more evident that the "new avenues" that Davies has trodden are, for some, too far from the old working-class ones he had become identified:

> The second wave of reviews [for *Under the Rose*] are much better—had a batch on Saturday from the "Press Cuttings"—including the leading fiction review in Manchester Guardian (very good); and John O'London's; and a most interesting and long review in the current "Spectator"—a model of what a review ought to be, critical, but creative and discerning of virtues—this by Kate O'Brien. Also an amusing sort of 'display' review or article in

> week last Sunday's 'Graphic'-'Book of the Week: The Woman who Gave All for Love', complete with lovely picture of a woman using her lipstick.
>
> Alas, though, the "Big Three" (Times Lit, Observer and Sunday Times) were so dreadfully hostile—and altogether soon as the book was out, worse luck. The strange thing was that I didn't feel in the least bruised. I really felt I knew so much more than these reviewers, particularly Frank Swinnerton who is so terribly bookish! But of course, it was unfortunate for the book; must have affected sales.
>
> These reviews, however, were nothing compared to a full-page attach [sic] in a socialist paper called "The Tribune", headed "Under the Welsh Rose." As far as I can judge, people think I ought not to have left the woes of the workers to write this kind of book. A pox on such limited minds. (RD to RM undated NLW MS 20897 E 49)

This is a lengthy quotation, but it illustrates Davies's sensitivity to reviews (despite his dismissal of them). He is concerned with their possible effects on sales, he is familiar with their personalities, he is conscious of their relative influence and their various commitments or agendas. He interacts with a landscape of critical expectations and navigates his career across it.

After his five year debate with Wells, Davies concluded that the rejection of *Under the Rose* was the result of his abandonment of the working-class association that he had worked so hard to cultivate. If this is in fact the case, it is telling that when Kate O'Brien wrote her largely positive *Spectator* review, *Under the Rose* was her first exposure to Davies's work. She was not able to say, along with the *TLS* reviewer of *Under the Rose*, that although "[a]t his best Mr. Rhys Davies is very good indeed, an extraordinarily live and sensitive interpreter of Welsh life and character…[he] is not at his best in 'Under the Rose,' which is a far cry from his previous novel, 'Jubilee Blues,' and which exhibits, indeed, an altogether surprising degree of artifice" (481). The reviewer complains of too much artifice, that Davies "labours hard—much too hard" (481), in this novel. It seems that when Davies ceased dealing with his working-class themes and abandoned the "raw stuff of life" that people expected from him as a Welsh writer, the authenticity and immediacy of his voice was reduced to craft, artifice, and even triviality.

That *Under the Rose* was a trivial novel was certainly the message of Daniel George's *Tribune* review. He began his review with an unidentified quotation from a "notable literary critic" of 1915. The quotation reads,

> The reading public of the last twenty years or so has consisted very largely of the middle-class women who live in the suburbs in a state of robust idleness, their small families taken off their hands by nurses and their houses efficiently run by servants.... That enfeebling influence will cease. Women will have to work harder and, if the war is of long duration, they will have to bear more children. The world will become harder, and hard people will want books written with power about important things. (22)

Davies, we must assume, has failed to be either powerful or important, and, even worse, feeds a feminine idleness. George goes on to ridicule Davies's technique:

> Four paragraphs later "a cluster of saliva bubbles formed at the corner of her lips."
>
> (No, she had not been in an air raid. She was, I gather, just being Welsh.)
>
> Over to page 17. "You're beautiful, beautiful," he cried, and held her away from him in one arm, scrutinizing her impudently. "Your breasts, Rachel, they've come out!"
>
> This seemed like no place for me, so I quit. (22)

Apparently, this sensual and passionate tale, tucked away in the Welsh hills, is too far removed from the bombs falling on London—too far removed from the political realities of life. (Even Kate O'Brien concluded her review by thanking the book for taking her "mind refreshingly away during many hours from actual, international furies" (348).) As if wary of this movement in Davies's writing, Heinemann's dust jacket for *Under the Rose* includes the Glyn Jones *Life and Letters To-day* review of *Jubilee Blues* that I mentioned earlier. According to Jones, any transition that Davies may be going through is heading *toward* the political rather than away from it: "Rhys Davies seems to me a writer in transition. Unlike his early master, D. H. Lawrence, who I believe travelled the opposite road, he works toward an attitude of greater humanity, and to a realization that the common problems of mankind, taken in the mass, are not sexual, but economic" (back flap of *Under the Rose*). But even Davies cannot deny that *Under the Rose* is a departure from his former working-class themes. When Raymond Marriott finally reads the novel and does not like it, Davies responds: "Sorry you didn't like *Under the Rose*. It was the product of Rhys Davies no 2, who is not necessarily inferior to no 1, only different. I have a side of me which must be expressed in that type of work. But what I ought to do, of course, is to have two names (like Wm Sharp and Fiona Macleod—wasn't it?)" (RD to RM First Sunday after Easter 1941 NLW MS 20897 E 52).

When I think of Davies adopting a pseudonym, I find myself entertaining the possibility that he might have chosen a female name. Daniel George's criticism of *Under the Rose* is all about finding the appropriate derogatory terms for dismissing what he understands as a trivial book, and it is not the only occasion on which Davies was granted a particularly feminine appeal. To begin with, I wonder whether Davies's consistent privileging of female characters might have led to a temptation to classify him as a women's writer. By 1950, Kay Dick was suggesting that Davies serialize one of his novels for *Housewife Magazine*. The novel is likely *Marianne*, first published in 1951, which tells the story of a woman's vengeful seduction and indirect murder of the man she believes is responsible for her twin sister's death. Davies resists Dick's suggestion in words that are very dismissive of what he imagines women readers are looking for: "Also thanks for the "Housewife" suggestion. I haven't written a story for over a year and, regarding serialization of this novel, I don't know. It's a good story and, I imagine, would appeal to women, but it's not all story, and the other things, I again imagine, wouldn't appeal" (RD to KD 21 July 1950 HRHRC). Davies thinks that women want "all story," presumably with all the thinking bits taken out. Or, perhaps he resisted the idea that he was a women's writer because he knew, or felt, that the association was a trivializing one.

There are other instances where Davies is understood as having a primarily female appeal. The *TLS* review of the depression-ridden *Jubilee Blues* is entitled "A Woman of Wales" when one might expect something more illustrative of the working class strife of the novel. There is also something suspicious about that *Graphic* review of *Under the Rose* entitled, "The Woman Who Gave All for Love," complete with picture of a woman using her lipstick. The cover of a 1952 American pulp edition of *Marianne* looks and reads rather sensationally. Further, a 1961 piece on Davies in the *Western Mail* by Alma Jones draws specific attention to his feminine perception: "Only during the course of the evening did an occasional gimlet glance cause me to remember that here was a man of almost terrifying perception, whose penetration into the minds and motives of my sex…was something to be regarded as shocking, if not actually impermissible" (5).

Davies's reluctance to be associated with the feminine and therefore trivial reader may be the cause for his occasional (and one would think, given his strong female characters, inconsistent) misogyny. Davies is often dismissive of the female reader. In "A Pig in a Poke" (1931), Ianto, a young miner, goes to London to find a wife, Flo, whom he brings back to Wales only to discover their total incompatibility. Ianto is no more admirable than Flo, steeped as he is in chapel respectability, but Flo's dissolution and drunkenness are accompanied by her ignorance and her taste for lowbrow pulp romances: "She was a romantic young woman and her bedroom was full of flyblown sixpenny novelettes" (112). The opiate dumbness of her reading material is made clear when she first takes to drink and Ianto discovers her with "a novelette on the floor, and a bottle of gin beside it" (115).

A similar character appears in "The Friendly Creature" (1936), in which a scholar who writes "middles" for "austere literary papers" (258), rents a cottage next to an eccentric romantic woman who also has a taste for the drink, "popular novel[s]" (257), and "film stars" (261). She develops an obsession for the scholar and, when she reads the sensual language of his translation of the letters of Heloise, she mistakes it for sexual language and flies into a fit of violent seduction:

No longer a virgin...

FIGURES 13 AND 14: FRONT AND BACK COVERS OF A 1952 AMERICAN POPULAR LIBRARY PULP EDITION OF *MARIANNE*. THE BLURB ON THE BACK OF THE BOOK IS NOT A DIRECT QUOTATION FROM THE TEXT.

> Then in a respectful and wondering voice, she declaimed:
> 'Would that your love, beloved, had less trust in me, that it might be more anxious! But the more confident I have made you in the past, the more neglectful now I find you. Remember, I beseech you, what I have done, and pay heed to what you owe me. While with you I enjoyed carnal pleasures, many were uncertain whether I did so from love or from desire…'
> 'Oh,' she cried then, clapping her hands, "you write like that! Beautiful…. And I thought you wrote things that were too clever for the likes of me. (264-265)

While one could read this passage as a meeting of two worlds, it becomes clear in the subsequent clash of the two characters that there can never be any real reconciliation of their differences. The story ends with the scholar bolting the door behind the hopelessly romantic woman. Or, more figuratively, with this representative of literary authority and sexual reserve barring the door against these transgressive female bodies and consumers of popular culture.

Other examples of the same associations are found in *My Wales*, where Davies dismisses a farm girl on the same grounds: "Bronze-haired like her brother she laid in my hands one of those threepenny novelettes which while away the idle hours of girls all over the place" (255). Also, when discussing the limited demand for Welsh fiction, he describes the writer of the popular, romantic Wales that he sometimes peddled as a feminine one: "If harmless, the writer may be welcomed as the Welsh Thomas Hardy appearing at last. If flattering sticky towards Wales he (generally she) is a beautiful writer writing justly about a beautiful subject" (*My Wales* 209). Finally, in a letter to A. Dywe Evans, of Heinemann, he complains that the dust jacket of *The Perishable Quality* "suggests a 'mill-girl romance' vulgarity" (RD to ADE 26 Feb. 1957 RHAL).

These female consumers of popular culture approximate Janice Radway's discussion of the feminization of the middlebrow reader in "On the Gender of the Middlebrow and the Threat of the Culturally Fraudulent Female." In this essay, Radway explores the reasons why the Book-of-the-Month Club's subscribers "were invariably either pictured as women or described in highly gendered language" (873), even though close to half of the Club's subscribers were male. Radway claims that threat of a marketed and standardized "culture" was both vilified and trivialized through its feminization. The unruly and tasteless female was the discursive counterpoint to the truly rational and discriminating reader:

> Characterized as mere children, the consumers of middlebrow culture were feminized by their close association with nonjudgmental, maternal authorities *and* by their indiscriminate, infantile consumption of purportedly uniform products. Redundantly gendered in this way and further portrayed as a fluid, oozing mass, middlebrow consumers were consequently constructed in opposition to the distinct, discriminating, rational, and judgmental reader, that is, to the characteristic agent of the democratic public sphere. (883)

George's dismissal of Davies in his *Tribune* review of *Under the Rose* is set within these clear discursive boundaries. To him, Davies's audience is a tasteless middlebrow one, not the discerning (public school educated) readers, or the manly and politically motivated working-class readers of *The Tribune*. And Davies himself, perhaps wary of his possible classification (and dismissal) as a women's writer, or maybe just sharing the sexist association of mass culture with the feminine, imagines the feminine reader as an extravagant and tasteless one.

Davies's misogyny goes beyond constructing these dismissive female readers of popular romance novels. In "From a Notebook" (1944), after claiming that "the operation, at once delicate and simple, of becoming a woman…is achieved without damage to oneself" (65), he asks,

> why is it that no woman novelist has given us a portrait of a man that can equal Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary—to mention only two! Women's delineation of men is invariably shadowy and as if seen out of the eye's corner. Is it because they have, after all, a greater delicacy than rough-and-ready men writers and cannot go any further in sacrificing their sex than wearing trousers and smoking cigars like George Sand… Charlotte Bronte's men are spinster's abstractions, Jane Austen's are seen with too skittish a feminine eye. Women novelists still wear the veil in this and are too deeply embedded in their sex. (67)

I imagine that this is Davies's reasoning for dismissing Virginia Woolf in a letter to Raymond Marriott as "too much of a lady to be a good novelist" (RD to RM 25 July 1942 NLW MS 20897 E 59). What does he mean by this? Well, let's look at Davies's 1939 review in which he praises Elizabeth Inglis-Jones's *Pay Thy Pleasure*. Davies informs the reader that he is gratified to "come across a novel—especially a woman's novel—with a heroine who is ugly, unkempt and generally repulsive, and a hero (if such he may be called) who is gross and recognizably a man; moreover, both are past middle age" (247). I can only assume that Davies expects a woman writer to write only pretty love stories for young girls. And he no doubt means to be kind when he concludes that Inglis-Jones "can draw a man like a good man-author; her male characters are not the lop-sided ghosts so frequent in women's novels" (247).

There are other examples of Davies's misogyny, like his anger at what he regards as the female tendency toward the waste of words and their "absolutely demented… NEED TO SPEAK" ("From a Notebook" 67); or his strange observation that lesbianism was a "hobby-like aberration" and that "[a]ll of three or four lesbians [he] got to know were wedded to men and could roast a shoulder of lamb with the best of wives (NLW MS 21532B II MS 5 Print of a Hare's Foot 1st Draft 178). It should be clear by these examples that Davies, having just written several novels that were credited by some for their political sensitivi[illegible] would not have been pleased to be "reduced" to a women's writer.

Keeping in mind, firstly, the beating that Davies took for *Under the Rose*; secondly, his fear of being perceived as irrelevant, trivial and feminine; and, thirdly, his five year attempt to live up to the expectations placed upon a Welsh writer, it is significant that Davies's next novel returns to a South Wales mining valley and the vicissitudes of industrial life in *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*. Written amidst Davies's pessimistic reaction to the war, he saw the book as "looking forward (desperately?) to some sort of belief, though in a quite unsentimental way" (RD to RM 3 July 1941 NLW MS 20897 E 54). Heinemann accepted the novel in three days (RD to RM 3 July 1941 NLW MS 20897 E 54), it sold out in one week (RD to LQ 19 Nov. 1941 NLW MS 23106 E 20), and when Daniel George reviewed this book for *The Tribune*, his opinion of Davies had altered considerably:

> The last time I tried to read a novel by Mr. Rhys Davies I could not get on with it. His new one, *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*, I could hardly get away from....
>
> ...From the first chapter I felt safe and pleased—pleased because it seemed to me that Mr. Davies found a style which would carry his talent to a larger public, to readers whose complacency it would insidiously disturb; for I believe that writers who have something worth saying should say it persuasively to the largest possible number of people, not mutter it in the ears of a coterie. If Tomorrow to Fresh Woods becomes a bestseller it will do no harm to anybody. (16)

Gone now are George's fears of the "robust idleness" of the female reader. He now praises a novel that has found its proper public space in the work of the world. And all of a sudden George's rhetoric is in step with those who propound the documentary authenticity of Davies's representations of working life and we are again confronted with one of those lists itemizing Davies's attention to "recording" Rhondda life with a lack of artifice, or "affectation":

> The accounts of strikes, meetings, chapels, faggots-and-peas suppers, a "Clochmerle" incident, and the general life of the small community are represented with the humour and persuasiveness of an unaffected style engaged in recording what it conceives to be the truth. Here one feels is a novelist getting down to his job and making a success of it. (16)

And as if this workingman's picture of the novelist and his serious work weren't enough, *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*, like "A Pig in a Poke" and "The Friendly Creature," defines itself against the incontinent female reader in the form of Dilys, Penry's sister who "emotionally [reads] East Lynne" (196), and who refuses to set the table as she lets "an East Lynne tear splash on the page" (198). I wonder how strongly Davies felt the "rebuke" from the largely negative reviews of *Under the Rose*, and if his insecurity sent him back to the path he had trodden so successfully under the critical guidance of G. H. Wells. Two years later, as if rewarded for this acquiescent move, Davies began writing bi-weekly contributions for *The Tribune*. It would seem that Gollancz, who had once refused to publish Davies, indirectly provided him with a temporary home in the very pages that had so soundly dismissed him.

Parlors and the Proletariat

Davies's deployment of the trivial woman's relationship to literature has more to do with his insecurities regarding his career than anything else. He is resisting his dismissal as a trivial writer who appeals to the idle housewife. This same process is evident in Davies's representation of the working classes. Even when couched in the committed political language of his private letters, his working classes are an idealized and aestheticized extension of his self-image as a commercially untainted artist. His representations are very much in line with Woolf's characterization of the middlebrow, serving as a counterpoint to the respectable and feminine superficial mass; that hypothetical quantity, or "metaphor for the unknowable and invisible" (Carey 21) multitude who threaten taste and distinction by virtue of their ostensible consumerist homogeneity. This mass is the constant bugbear underwriting all Davies's treatments of class. For Davies, the mass is most dangerously that category of people for whom respectability, status and culture can be purchased and superficially displayed. They are exactly analogous to Radway's middlebrow, "an increasingly visible group of consumers who enthusiastically [buy] the diverse products of a growing industry devoted to the marketing of 'culture'" ("On the Gender" 872). They shift around that middling area where Orwell identifies himself as "lower-upper-middle class" (121) and from where Davies himself emerged.

Rita Felski, in her article, "Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame and the Lower Middle Class," describes this category as "not so much an identity as a non-identity" (34), the identity one does not want to own for its lack of claim to any "authentic" experience. It is applied, Felski argues, "from the outside, by those of higher social status, or retrospectively, by those who once belonged to the lower middle class and have since moved beyond it. In both cases, it becomes an object of irony, humor, or scorn rather than a notion that one rallies around and identifies with" (41). This nonidentity appears in a kind of literature-of-shame (to which Davies is a contributor) as a world of "stewed pears, portable radios, false teeth, lace curtains, hire-purchase furniture, teapots, manicure sets, [and] life insurance policies" (Felski 35). It is what Davies, in a tirade against his ration book, referred to as a "margarine civilization" (RD to GB 8 July 1941 HRHRC), and it is the place from which Roderick Bowen, the semi-autobiographical father of *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*, plays the same five songs on his piano and refers to the same single work he's read, Charles Lamb's *Dissertation on Roast Pig*, as a mark of his learning and distinction. The lower middle class, Felski argues, is "tortured by a constant struggle to keep up appearances on a low income…[with] a craven respect for high culture accompanied by almost complete ignorance of its content" (35-36). It is identified to be exorcized or to establish the authenticity of alternatives at the more extreme identifications of "upper" and "lower" class.

One of Davies's earliest short stories, "Mrs. Evans Number Six" (1926), illustrates this superficial class aspiration. Though the characters are technically working-class mining families, the cultural phenomenon that Davies engages is the same. These are culture-consumers who are laughable by virtue of their craven desire for status in complete absence of any cultural "knowledge." As her residential name suggests, Mrs. Evans is a fatally house-proud woman who believes that her status is visibly displayed in that time-honoured symbol of lower-middle-class respectability, the untouchable, almost sacred, front-room, or parlour. Her life is governed by a cult of acquisition through which the women of the "row" continually measure their respective statuses:

> Mr. and Mrs. D. T. Evans lived in Number 6. They had been married and lived in the Row twelve years. During those years Mrs. Evans had created for herself an enviable reputation. She was without children, possessed the best collection of teapots in the Row, had three clocks, and on Sunday wore a hat made of real fur. Her collection of teapots was famous; she had twenty-seven—eight more than old Mrs. Hughes, Number 10, had possessed. It had been a race between the two women to collect the largest number, and there had been much heart burning and acrimony over it. Mrs. Evans had said that Mrs. Hughes starved her family in order to buy teapots: Mrs. Hughes believed that Mrs. Evans denied her husband his rights so that she might escape the burden of expensive consequences. However, Mrs. Evans' collection got larger, and finally her rival gave up the race and died. (29)

In this instance, respectability is bound up with notions of domestic pride, status and womanhood that are perversely displayed in the fickle competition of two women who challenge each other's roles as wife and mother while trying to establish the symbolic capital that crystallizes the security of those roles. Within this feminized domestic space, the front room, or the parlour, is the archetypal space of social status and an especially charged site of class-anxiety.

The principal conflict of the story arises when one of Mrs. Evans' neighbours acquires a piano, prompting Mrs. Evans to demand an organ from her husband. Through denials of food and flesh, and finally lowering herself into sickness, Mrs. Evans gets her organ, and the story ends with a vision of the parlour as a shrine to Mrs. Evans' status:

> That evening the curtains were drawn back from the front room windows, the lamp was kept burning, its light shining on the dark

> wood and the bright gilt of the organ. Peace and serenity reigned in the house, and Mrs. Evans sat before the fire in pleased conversation with Mrs. Jones, smiling and nodding her head happily.
>
> God was good. He always gave triumph to those who worshipped faithfully. And from the first she knew she was better than any other woman in the Row. And what did it matter that neither she nor Dai could play the organ? It was there, in the house, and the only one in the Row. (36)

It could not be clearer that cultural status here "is an empty but potent signifier, a talisman that offers the promise, however opaque, of entry into a higher world" (Felski 36). Mrs. Evans is a representative of the undiscerning, acquisitive and ignorant mass that Davies seeks to define himself against. Time and again, some version of this woman is repudiated in favour of one or another more authentic alternative.

Davies's favourite alternative to this feminine mass is, appropriately, an imagined virile working class man whose authenticity unmasks the frail superficialities of this consumer culture. Davies is by no means alone in this appeal to a heroically authentic working class. D. H. Lawrence is perhaps the most famous example of its fictional realization in modern literature. Lawrence's later life may be read as a quest for the unspoiled mass, untouched by modern industrial civilization (Carey 36). Carey regards this trend as another reaction to the fear of the masses on behalf of the intellectuals: a wishful alternative to the mass and a call for a properly ignorant, innocent and more 'natural' peasant class. Davies inculcated this ideal working class from Lawrence and especially from *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Shortly after Lawrence's death, Putnam published Davies's Welsh version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The Red Hills* (1932). The novel tells the story of a love affair between the self-exiled miner, Iorwerth, and his lover, Virginia. Iorwerth ekes out a simple living selling the coal from a disused level in the mountains outside of town, and Virginia is the prodigal daughter of a respectable chapel mining family. The tension of the story is in Iorwerth and Virginia's passionate resistance to the repressive conventions of the nonconformist community. Early in the novel, Iorwerth is established in opposition to the unthinking masses he comes to reject as mindless and degraded: "Massed humanity—how hateful and repulsive it was! He had made the mistake of trying to love humanity, of trying to idealize a raw mass of protoplasmic stuff moving blindly over the deserts of time" (63). Iorwerth decides not to labour in service of "a dirtily massed humanity" (41), but seeks "his own personal salvation deep in himself through love and awareness of beauty…and art, a sensuality of perception, delight in the visible world" (46). In opposition to the working class that he has abandoned, Iorwerth stands as the sensitive and intelligent labourer, entirely individual and free from the moral surveillance of the 'respectable' community:

> each tried to outdo his neighbour in worldly possessions—sideboards, pianos, tombstones on family graves and heavy gold watch-chains to wear with their Sunday suits and bowler hats. And they mistrusted Iorwerth for the spirit of liberation that was in him; his spear-like directness [sic] his untrammeled laughter, the poise that came from his sense of equality with all that was fine and courageous in life, his simple enjoyment of sensuality, his ability to drink without becoming a sot: all the clear burning of a natural flame in him. (57-58)

Iorwerth is the counter-point to the superficial and acquisitive community. Further, his association with beauty and art is significant for Davies as well, even if it is somewhat removed from the purity and innocence of the peasant ideal. The "natural flame" that burns in Iorwerth is basically analogous to the "intense flame of creation" burning in Alun in "Interlude." And this flame is also found in Penry's idolization of a miner with a deft hand at sketching: When a drunk and poetry-spouting Penry observes John as a "naked apparition prancing" (218) on the bank of the ravine, he feels "a flame [run] through him like terror" (218). All of these visionary invocations of working-class men recall Tudor Morris of *A Time to Laugh*, for whom the labour struggles of the valley are a canvas for the colours of his soul. An early dialogue in *A Time to Laugh* clearly carries the same resistance as Iowerth's rejection of massed humanity, and once again echoes Woolf's praise of the vital lowbrow:

> "My fight," said Tudor, slowly as if he hadn't heard the last observation, "is inside myself, yours outside. But the goal seems to be the same—physical and spiritual ease."
>
> "There doesn't seem to be any use for you to come among us then," Billy said, a little sullenly.
>
> Melville, who was leaning forward as if tensely, his shoulders contracted, gazing into the fire, said in his strange voice of pain:
>
> "He comes among us because I suppose we've chucked away most of the fears and taboos of organised society. He feels a certain amount of freedom among us...Isn't that true, Tudor?" he asked, his voice dragging. "We *do* mean something to you, don't we?"
>
> "You're alive," Tudor said. (20-21)

Davies is less concerned with what the working classes *are* than what they *mean to him*. In this case, as in much of Davies oeuvre, they represent a passionate resistance to that superficial culture of respectability (also so prevalent in Davies's oeuvre) whose access to an authentic art (or more specifically Davies's art) is corrupted by a middlebrow commodification of culture.

The narrow world of respectability threatening Iorwerth and Virginia in *The Red Hills* is once again a primarily feminine one. When Virginia's father worries for his daughter's reputation, his concern is based in a female world of moral authority: "Especially you, Virginia, that the women-folk are interested in. Do you think that they don't notice you as you tramp over the hills? And gossiping at the doors they are everlastingly. No doubt the women of Bryn Street saw you come home out of that dip where the man lives" (109). Virginia's stepmother is the representative of this female surveillance and cult-of-respectability. Like Mrs. Evans Number Six, her status is symbolized by her "shining living-room, where each object was cleanly and rigidly in place" (87). When particularly scandalized by Virginia's bahaviour she "swept in harsh dignity out to the parlour, where she lit the gas and occupied herself in moving the china bric-a-brac about, changing their places. The house was her pride and everything shone with the bright purity of Heaven itself" (104). But, of course, Naomi is pushed aside in the novel's development of its themes. She falls to a stroke, caused, Davies informs us, by her own violently righteous hatred, and subsequently dies.

This gendering of class is a common trend in this tradition of class representation. The working classes are often figured as a virile working-class man, while the lower middle class is associated with the domestic space of the suburban home and the symbolic castration of men (Felski 43). We can see this trend worked out in Davies's *The Stars, the World and the Women* (1930) in which the bookish and soulful collier, Bryn Watts, is pushed by an ambitious and superficial wife into a middle-class life that eventually kills him. Davies tells us that it "was the process of making [Bryn] a gentleman that finished him" (103). Forced into "half a dozen stiff, glazed contraptions for fixing around the neck—collars with long fronts attached…new black and spotted bows, cuffs, silk handkerchiefs, flimsy socks…and spats" (104) and paraded through the homes of a respectable middle-class avenue, Bryn comes to the realization that he "had been deceived by the ways of women, giving credit to the wisdom of their minds and seduced by the delicacies of their hands" (105). He dies at the end of the story in a violent and rapturous revolt against his wife's ambitions.

Time and again, in Davies's novels, the uncritical, superficial and "respectable" woman must be pushed aside before a more masculine working-class authenticity may be achieved. Appropriately, when Edith Roberts is unsatisfied with her middle-class husband, Edgar, in *Rings on Her Fingers* (1930), she contrasts him to the virile young miner, Hugh Richards. Edith wants desperately to "create a *manliness* in" Edgar (131), and longs rhapsodically for the untainted striking miners:

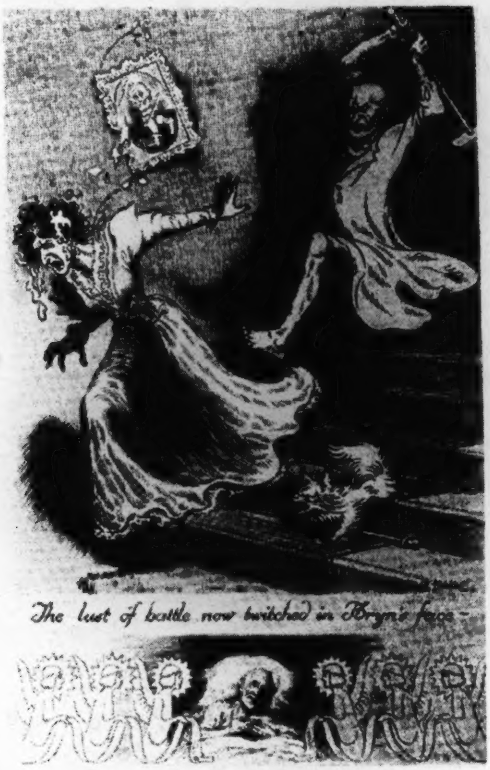
The lust of battle now twitched in Bryn's face –

FIGURE 15: FRANK C. PAPE'S ILLUSTRATION OF *THE STARS, THE WORLD, AND THE WOMEN* (1930) SHOWS THE WORKING-CLASS MAN CHASING THE MIDDLE-CLASS WOMAN FROM THE HOME.

> What a fine body of men they are! They're something pagan, as though they've preserved something of the original status of man, arisen out of the earth and achieving his living in direct contact with it. Rid the thing of all its disgusting commercial and industrial aspects and this Strike means the men are trying to protect their natural possessions from a stealthy and powerful ogre, a robber. (151)

In Davies's pursuit of this "natural" working-class man, a number of artificial middle-class women are cast aside. Naomi dies to make room for the passionate young Iorwerth. Dr. Tudor Morris of *A Time to Laugh* replaces a solicitor's daughter, Mildred, who "would be the perfect wife, her house…[having] an ordered peace" (68), with the working-class Daisy who "behaved with a familiar confidence among the men" (11) and who had "no sexual limitations, no coyness or conceit, no virtuous locking-up of her treasures" (27). Similarly, in *Jubilee Blues*, the pit manager's daughter, Annie Vaughn, cannot descend to the poverty of her communist school-teacher lover, David Morris. David dismisses her as a "menial to money, to social position, to clothes even" (172) and she is eventually shunted off into a loveless "bourgeois" marriage, having lost her chance of getting close to the "true vital commonness" (61) of the novel's heroine, Cassie Jones, proprietress of the masculine world of the pub. David eventually turns his affections to his fellow communist, Violet Gwynne, with whom he takes "comradely hike[s]" (253), and who Annie dismisses as "boyish" (265) and "not feminine enough for [David]" (265), with her "short hair, and flat body, and feet in thick brogues" (265). Each of these menial, passionless, bourgeois women conform to Davies's condemnation of a mass that threatens to consume his writing in the same indifference with which, he imagines, they purchase their twin beds, their tinned food, or their pianos.

In opposition to feminine triviality and artifice, Davies celebrates that "fine body of men" adored by Edith Roberts in *Rings on Her Fingers* (1930) or the naked body of John and its "vital harmony, undisturbed pattern, perfect measure" (218) admired by Penry. Despite Davies's attempt to become Wells' novelist of a thousand pages, his working classes are highly aestheticized. Davies disavows the embourgeoisied nonconformist respectability that he associates with femininity and ultimately the feminine reader, and turns instead to a male-centered working-class authenticity. He never really provides what would typically be categorized as the proletarian novel that Daniel George and G. H. Wells were looking for and his working classes are part of a dream-vision of some peasant authenticity opposing the threat of the mass, and the possibility that he may be read as a novelist for the masses.

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Chapter Four

Half-told stories: The Art of Being Gay in the Marketplace

In 1934, Davies wrote to G. H. Wells complaining of what he saw as the absence of homosexual literature: "I wish someone would write a non-hysterical and straightforward—unfrightened—novel on this subject—difficult, though, so little precedent stuff to guide and aid one; it's a raw subject in literature" (RD to GHW 7 Feb. 1934 HRHRC). These words beg the question of why Davies didn't attempt to write this novel himself. It was not until 1971 that he published his lesbian novel, *Nobody Answered the Bell*, and even this piece is at one remove from his own experience and very deeply rooted in heterosexual binaries. Did Davies feel poorly equipped for the task with so little "precedent stuff" to guide him? Or was he perhaps frightened of the exposure that writing a "straightforward" queer novel might entail? This letter makes no suggestion that it should be Davies who writes such a novel: He had just read Spender's "By the Lake," and found it "curiously arresting, though only half-told, like all these homosexual stories," and he hoped that Spender, "who…is obviously fitted for the task, [would] follow this scrap up with a big piece" (RD to GHW 7 Feb. 1934 HRHRC). And while Spender would have been good, Lawrence would have been even better: Davies recalls Lawrence telling him that he had planned to write a novel dealing with homosexuality to follow *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and laments that the novel was never written: "I wish he could have written it, he would have been particularly revealing about this oddly attractive subject, so common in social life these days: though not homosexual in the way it's generally understood (as far as I could see), he seemed to have a deep awareness of it that I can only describe as spiritual" (RD to GHW 7 Feb. 1934 HRHRC). In this letter, Davies speculates about the sexualities of two other authors, considers their suitability for writing a queer novel, and sidesteps his own sexuality altogether. In certain respects, therefore, this chapter is about the novel that Davies never wrote and the ways in which he only "half-told" what he never felt called upon to divulge.

This letter to Wells is one of Davies's most voluble moments on the subject of homosexuality, and even here he silenced his own queer identity: Homosexuality was something "odd" to be written of by some subtler queer. But Davies was not incapable of writing a queer novel. His own life provided him with all the material he needed; his autobiography might well have become his queer novel, if he had been a less cautious author. Other autobiographies, like Quentin Crisp's *The Naked Civil Servant* (1968), or Rupert Croft-Cooke's *The Numbers Came* (1963) are better pictures of a queered London than that found in Davies's *Print of A Hare's Foot* (1969), though all three were written within five years of one another. Nor was there a lack of models from which to work from. Radclyffe Hall, Thomas Mann, Virginia Woolf, and Christopher Isherwood had all to varying degrees dealt with homosexuality in the novel by the time Davies made his call for an "unfrightened" queer expression in 1934. To be fair to Davies, however, few of these novelists treated homosexuality as their central theme.

The "unfrightened" homosexual novel that Davies longed for in 1934 had actually been written for twenty years in the form of E. M. Forster's *Maurice*. Forster's anachronistic pastoralism would have appealed to Davies's pagan libertinism—a paganism which is defined by one of Davies's characters in *The Painted King* as "The Pagan!—what is known as 'pagan'. Freedom from our prejudices carried to the extreme—" (*The Painted King* 148). Forster was committed to a classless and pastoral homosexual love in a "greenwood" free from the prejudices of the age. He was determined to write a homosexual novel that did not bow to moral prohibition. However, this book would never be as revolutionary as its content was, for this idealistic homosexual novel would not be published in Forster's lifetime for reasons he outlines in the "Terminal Note":

> A happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write otherwise. I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in this sense, Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood. I dedicated it "To a Happier Year" and not altogether vainly. Happiness is its keynote—which by the way has had an unexpected result: it has made the book more difficult to publish. Unless the Wolfenden Report becomes law, it will probably have to remain in manuscript. If it ended unhappily, with a lad dangling from a noose or with a suicide pact, all would be well, for there is no pornography or seduction of minors. But the lovers get away unpunished and consequently recommend crime. (Forster 236)

In a word, Forster was determined that *Maurice* be "unfrightened." In achieving this goal, Forster tells us that there were "scarcely any cancellations" (238) to his manuscript. He does not explicitly make the point, but I imagine cancellations would have implied a self-censorship that would have limited his creation of the "greenwood" of homosexual love. Consequently, *Maurice* does not exhibit any of the silencing and coding that Davies employed. The result of this openness was that the novel did not see the light of day until 1971, the same year that Davies published *Nobody Answered the Bell*. The same moral climate that kept Forster's novel unpublished kept Davies from threatening a precarious career by writing his own "unfrightened" homosexual novel.

I believe Davies did not write his homosexual novel because it would have been a shaky professional venture. Queer themes are discernable, if not directly identified, in much of his fiction, but almost never explicitly. There are queer characters in four stories dated 1931, 1933, and 1949. And several of his novels bear the stamp of the gay Davies with queer (though not literally gay) characters in such novels as *Rings on Her Fingers* (1930), *Honey and Bread* (1935), *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* (1941), and *The Painted King* (1954); however, none of the novels could be considered "straightforward." They are very coded and silenced narratives. His explicitly gay characters appear only in the less marketable short story form. No editor ever published them in any periodical and, as far as I can tell, Davies never tried to place them anywhere but within larger collections, tucked between his more familiar stories of Wales. And of the four gay stories, very few come close to letting their characters live in the happily-ever-after of Forster's greenwood: One is left chastened and alone, frightened of the revelation of her sexuality; two live in a world defined by the successive "perversities" experienced by the story's amoral and sexually adventurous heroine; and one burns to death in his costume-shop while the police watch from the street below. As present as these gay representations are, they do not amount to much in a career such as Davies's. Gay characters feature in only four stories out of more than one hundred, and one or two of these might not have been recognized as such by a reader who did not know what to look for. None of the novels before *Nobody Answered the Bell* need have been considered the slightest bit queer by their readers.

Given the difficulties surrounding a book like *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, or perhaps more relevantly, Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness*, and given the fact that being gay was a punishable criminal offence throughout most of Davies's life, it is not surprising that a novelist who did not want to get a "reputation for being unsaleable" was wary of writing an "unfrightened" and fully-told homosexual novel. A writer as anxious as Davies was about marketable writing would not have found the forum for a gay writer that he enjoyed as a writer of Wales and the working class. Significantly, Davies's self-edited 1955 collection of stories omits all of his few gay ones from a list of nearly fifty other titles. As he implies in his preface, all four of his most queer stories are not among those that yielded their author "various degrees of satisfaction" (vii), but number among those that caused him "various degrees of unease" (vii). The result is a gay Davies who merely peeks out from an oeuvre that had obligations that were far removed from any queer expressiveness.

Davies couldn't ever step entirely out of the professional closet. I specify *professional* because it is clear that many of his *personal* associates recognized him as a gay man. Fred Urquhart, with whom Davies shared a cottage in Tring in the summer of 1946, described Davies as "100% homosexual" and remembers the author's obsession for guardsmen (Callard "Expatriate Novel" 86). Similarly, Nina Hamnett recalls an incident in which the poet, Anna Wickham, while visiting Davies's flat, ordered Davies into silence with an unmistakable comment on his sexuality: "Be quiet. There is only room for one leading lady here!" (248). But in public, this author who had exhausted the formations of his identity in terms of nation and class, was conspicuously silent on this equally important "category" of his identity, largely because of his public life as a writer of Wales and the Welsh working class. Naturally, therefore, all of the evidence that I have emphasized thus far in the production of Davies's career, particularly letters, reviews, dust jackets and advertisements, suddenly fail me. Davies did not write a homosexual novel until the last decade of his life and it was easy for reviewers to ignore what oblique treatments Davies did do of queer subjects. There were, that is to say, no expectations that Davies be a gay writer: there were no productions of gayness and the gay author. Rhys Davies, the professional writer and professional Welshman was decidedly *not* professionally gay.

In place of the evidence of the last three chapters, I am now interested in the ways in which Davies's writing expresses a queer sexuality in spite of, or perhaps because of, the market's disinterest in this aspect of his identity. Davies once again stands at odds with the market that defined so much of his life, but in this instance the market was not telling him what he could be, but what he could not be. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find that the artistic discourse that served Davies so well as the writer's claim to self-determination also operated as a proxy for his definition of a sexual self. This chapter will examine the place of art and the market in the context of Davies's negotiation of a queer identity.

I begin by discussing Davies's view of the place of sex and the sensual in literature and its specific relationship to his working-class Welsh subject. Davies regarded the limitations of nonconformist and working-class conceptions of sexuality and gender as prohibitive and destructive forces that led to a practiced and policed silence. Davies may have been a "hackneyed" writer of the Welsh working-class, but he was occasionally able to underwrite his narratives with insights that negotiated some space for his queer difference. I then describe Davies's few explicit engagements with the silence surrounding queer subjects, and demonstrate his awareness of the silence imposed upon his own writing. Next, I explain Davies's use of art and the anachronistic (by the time Davies adopts it) image of the dandy as a coded means of expressing his sexuality, particularly in his autobiographical writing. Finally, however, I conclude by pointing out that Davies did not in fact live in the world of art, but in that of the market. It is in this context that he formed his fullest statement on his sexual experience within the pages of *The Painted King* (1954). In this section, I reemphasize Davies's relationship to the market and provide a reading of *The Painted King* as a self-conscious representation of the conflict between the public world of art/writing/performance and the private, silenced queer self behind it.

Repressive Rhondda: Nonconformity and Sex

In many ways, the category "Welsh" was incompatible with Davies's gay themes. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Anglo-Welsh literature that came out of South Wales was largely conceived in an industrial context with the masculine and discrete working world of men at its centre. Nor was this a purely literary construction. Many have identified the male-centred working-class context of much of Welsh history and culture. Some of this work comes from feminist historians such as Deirdre Beddoe, Angela John, and others, who argue that the emphasis of Welsh history "has been placed on celebrating the land of our fathers" (John 1): "The icons of the making of modern Wales are powerful and familiar: coal-mining and slate-quarrying dominate the images of work in south and north respectively whilst rugby and male-voice choirs have frequently been made synonymous with recreation" (John 1). Wales's powerful labour tradition occluded women's work and lives, and Nonconformity reinforced domestic values that removed women from the formal economy and created a Wales that was working-class and oppressively masculine. These histories of Welsh women inform what Davies must have experienced living with a sexuality that was submerged beneath the dual forces of working-class culture and nonconformity. It makes sense, therefore, that so much of Davies's writing was geared toward the experiences of women in Wales; why, for instance, a collection of stories called *The Things Men Do*, should, as D. A. Callard points out, contain stories told primarily from the perspective of women ("Rhys Davies" 64). Writing the experiences of women was the closest that Davies could come to publicly resisting the dominant cultural forms of his Welsh subject.

In keeping with this working class and nonconformist context, Davies's Wales is one in which sensuality and the body have no place, and where closely guarded masculinity governs the order of life. Davies's autobiography and fiction consistently convey a strong sense of alienation from the rhythms of life and work in Blaenclydach, and portray the bleakness of the mining valleys as a kind of living death. R. L. Megroz reports Davies as having always thought of his youth in the Rhondda as a Lazarusian "burial, with [himself] lying somnolent in a coffin, but visually aware of the life going on above [him], and content to wait until the time came for [him] to rise and be [himself]" (qtd. in Megroz 1-3). Davies elsewhere likens the geographical formation of the Rhondda valley to a coffin and enjoys the coincidence that its first shallow pit was sunk by a Walter Coffin (*My Wales* 67). Even the surrounding hills are described as "coffin-coloured" (*Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* 56), by a Davies who felt that a more authentic self could not live and find expression in Blaenclydach. Death and its paraphernalia are important features in the landscape of Davies's Wales, and are often symbolic of the deep repression of Welsh nonconformity.

"A Woman" (1931) is a particularly clear illustration of Davies's preoccupation with sexual repression. It begins with a beautifully morbid description of the protagonist, Jane's, fanatically puritanical parents:

> Her father, one of those stony primitive Christians whose grim memorials are the chapels of Wales, discerned the impulse of evil in every action of the flesh; the pleasure he himself had frequently taken therein was always followed by periods of fanatic penance, aided by his wife, who thought of her body as a great sow that had imprisoned her soul. God would free them one day from the slimy walls of flesh that held their pure souls: until then one's only desire was to battle in fury with the horrid pleasure that was enacted in the body. (44)

In *The Withered Root*, Davies refers to nonconformists as "a death worshipping people" (235), and here, Jane's parents repudiate the sensual world with the same ecstatic desire for death. It is no coincidence, therefore, that when we see Jane's father reading her scripture, the text is the story of Lazarus, and in Jane's case, like Davies's, there is a strong sense of rising from beneath the death of nonconformity:

> Wide-eyed and grave, Jane listened. She saw the dead rise and come forth from the tomb, a napkin about his face. *Lord, by this time he stinketh.* Flesh was terrible, a thing of decay and death…Yet, she did not want to believe it of her own body: and she thought of her thin white skin. Her bosom issued from her narrow waist, like a slim hyacinth breaking from its sheath, her white legs, freed of her flannel petticoats, she liked to stretch and kick with a nervous joy. (44)

Jane's parents are trying to bury their daughter's sensuality beneath their nonconformist shame, the shame that creates a culture of silence regarding all things sexual, where children are "conceived in the silence of forbidden processes" ("A Woman" 44). It is not a profound observation that a gay man would have had few outlets for the experience of his marginalized sexuality. In fact, the only outlet seems to have been art and, eventually, the writing of stories like this one.

Despite the limitations upon Davies's writing of an "unfrightened" homosexual novel, he did, in his way, challenge the rigid morality and masculine dominance of the Rhondda. From the early influence of Lawrence onwards, sex and sensuality were important themes throughout Davies's *oeuvre*. The female protagonists of stories such as "The Skull" (1936) and the "The New Garment" (1931) are awakened into life from literal and figurative graveyards through sexual connections with working class men. "Revelation" is the story of the sexual awakening of a collier's married life after he catches a glimpse of the chief engineer's wife answering her door in the nude (1931). The title character of

"Blodwen" (1931) finds happiness in the arms of a mountain dwelling native above her mining village. All of these examples carry on the Lawrentian commitment to the passionate encounter with life that Davies worked out most fully in *The Red Hills* (1932). So Davies was struggling with the place of sex in his writing at the same time that he was trying to fashion himself as a working-class writer. For instance, among those defensive letters to G. H. Wells that featured so prominently in my discussion of Davies's anxieties regarding political fiction are two others in which Davies explores the place of sex in literature. The first one opens this chapter and the second one explains the centrality of sex in Davies's writing:

> The longer I live I'm more convinced that sexual harmony, physical satisfaction, is necessary for a complete spiritual liberation …
>
> …I cannot understand this mental fastidiousness about sex as an isolated thing, a fit subject *in itself* for stories—this intellectual prejudice which seems to me the modern form of the old-style moral prejudice. Why not a good story simply about sex?—it's as good a subject as farming a plot of land or a strike or a murder of Negroes, etc. Useless to say it's been dealt with ad nauseam; it's one of the fundamental subjects and while writers write it will go on being dealt with. I'm talking now of writers and not sex-appeal merchants. And in spite of Lawrence.
>
> In short stories in particular, too, one has to isolate a subject. But of course sex is not the beginning or end of life and the whole structure. But it's one of the chief impulses at work in man in his search for harmony, and I cannot see why a writer shouldn't exclusively select this impulse and isolate it in the pattern of his vision. (RD to GHW 7 Sept. 1936 HRHRC)

Davies feels constrained by what he perceives as a limitation in English readers who have no interest in sex as a subject for serious readers. This letter is Davies's response to Wells's lukewarm review of *The Skull*, and we detect Davies's defensive distancing act from the "sex-appeal merchants" of popular fiction and his attempt to his themes with Wells' materialist and political expectations.

For Davies, sex represents an authentic life free from such repressive influences as one finds in the Rhondda of his youth. The same context that foreclosed upon his sexuality foreclosed upon sex as such and many of his stories offer glimpses beneath the silence surrounding all things sexual. When Gomer Vaughan glimpses the chief engineer's naked wife at her door in "Revelation," he is getting a glimpse of a life and a world beyond the grim confines of the mining valley: "Gomer wished there was a country lane of shady trees with a clean stream running near, in this part of Wales. He would have liked to stroll there in peace that evening. But no—after his meal and bath there would be nowhere to go but the street corners, the miserable pub, or the bare uninviting hills. Ah, what a life!" (59). After discovering that a woman could be "respectable" (60) and naked at the same time, Gomer sets about creating a sexual paradise in his own home with a wife who has been taught "[t]oo much shame…by half" (66). Much of this concealed and revealed sexuality speaks to Davies's sexual concealment in the Rhondda. And, as surely as Davies knew that nonconformity was a limiting construct, so too was he certain that the available gender categories in the Rhondda were inadequate to the varieties of private sexualities beneath the public forms.

Davies's interest in representing submerged sexual lives involves treatments of the constructedness of gender and of the careful acts of unknowing that go into the public performance of identity. One of Davies's most powerful stories of the Rhondda, "Nightgown" (1942), is, as Katie Gramich has demonstrated, an especially effective *revelation* not only of the construction and contingency of knowledge and identity but of the private and public realms of knowledge which reveal that contingency. The story's nameless female protagonist's "femininity" is smothered by the oppressively masculine world of the mining valley. She bears five male children to her pub collier husband, all of whom grow up in the image of their father. Her home epitomizes the ubiquitous, inescapable and fiercely defended masculinity that characterizes so much of Davies's Rhondda:

> As the sons grew, the house became so obstreperously male that she began to lose nearly all feminine attributes and was apt to wear a man's cap and her sons' shoes, socks and mufflers to run out to the shop. Her expression became tight as a fist, her jaw jutted out like her men's and like them she only used her voice when it was necessary. (237)

The lilac dress she wore while courting her husband "was her last fling in that line" (237) and she has now forgotten how to perform femininity.

This woman is unable to "reinvent a feminine subjectivity" (Gramich 207) until the unstinting masculinity of her life is suddenly relieved by the discovery of a silk nightgown in a draper's window. The shock of seeing the delicate extravagance of the nightgown "struck her at first like a blow in the face" ("Nightgown" 239), so far was it from her rough world. The nightgown occupies a liminal space between the private world of the bedroom and the public shop window display, and she is shocked "to see the grand lady standing there undressed, as you might say, in public" ("Nightgown" 239). She is "suddenly thrilled" ("Nightgown" 239) and walks home "feeling this new luxury round her like a sweet, clean silence. Where no men live" ("Nightgown" 240). The "new luxury" is not the nightgown itself, which she will not own for another year, but the knowledge of a private identity that cannot be touched by the rough masculine world in which she lives. When she finally takes the nightgown home she hides it, significantly, "down under household things" (243) and does not wear it until she is laid out for the grave, released for the first and last time from the drudgery of working in the male world of miners. This story is a powerful depiction of the demoralizing circumstances in which many women lived and worked in the Rhondda and we need look no further for its *raison d'être*. But we cannot ignore the significance that these representations had for a gay Davies living in an oppressively masculine context where the forms of masculinity were rigidly defined and fiercely defended. The protagonist's nightgown might just as well be read as Davies's submerged sexuality, as his somnolent self, awaiting his chance to rise.

"A sexless world of men"

As "Nightgown" nicely demonstrates, Davies's identification as a Welshman and often a *representative* Welshman made the task of negotiating a Welsh identity that could accommodate his sexuality a very difficult one. Not only did nonconformity foreclose upon the sexual, but his working-class community offered only the most limited formulations of gender. As he recalls in his autobiography, *Print of a Hare's Foot* (1969), the world of the mining valley was a "heavily masculine" (59) one that repelled him even as he tried to identify with it. For instance, shortly after a failed sexual encounter with a woman, he recalls the alienating sight of a group of colliers: "I felt full of bad nerves as I alighted at raining Tonypandy with a group of half-envied, drunken, football-match colliers, who bawled exuberantly as the familiar black engine hissed under the ugly bridge. This place wearied me. The trap was here" (94). This masculine culture of sports and work directly touches upon Davies's sense of belonging and self. He half-envies the masculine camaraderie, but feels trapped by it as well: He wishes to belong, but not in the narrow definitions of gender offered by his immediate context. This heavily masculine world, therefore, excluded Davies's queer identity.

As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues in *Between Men*, the homosocial exists in an unbroken continuum with the homosexual (1), and part of homophobia's cultural power comes from the "similarities between the most sanctioned forms of male-homosocial bonding, and the most reprobated expressions of male homosexual sociality. ...For a man to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being 'interested in men'" (89). Such intense male bonding as one would expect to find in the working communities of the Rhondda required a policing against those bonds being carried too far, or being perceived as carried too far. And Davies, despite the fact that he had descended into the pits only once, depicts the working culture of the mines as an "alien world with its atmosphere of the underground which [the miners] carried about with them, a sexless world of men" (*TTFW* 186). Davies is, throughout his writing, very aware of the exclusiveness of the homosocial world of work and the policing of gender that accompanies it. Naturally, however, his particular depiction of those homosocial bonds is mingled with his queer expressiveness, or gaze, and he almost revels in the close male bonds that threaten the inviolability of masculine culture. In a particularly vivid scene from the passionate Lawrentian novel, *The Red Hills* (1932), Davies illustrates an intimate and subterranean masculinity in which the novel's sexual and spiritual hero, Iorwerth, enjoys a sensual, erotic and exotic scene of working men from his "secret watching place" (29):

> Then sometimes, as he trudged about the galleries on some errand, he would pause to admire a gaunt beauty in a scene before him...perhaps a trio of men intent on their job on the face of the coal, the faint golden light of their three lamps shining on their naked, muscle-gripped torsos as they smashed at the coal between the slanted columns of timber that held the roof. Soon their white flesh would be black as a negro's; and then streams of sweat would stripe them like tigers. He would smile at them from his secret watching place, the three heaving men etched in a luminous circle amid enshrouding darkness. Somehow it was good to see them and witness their determination to wrest treasure a mile under the earth's crust. (29)

M. Wynn Thomas regards Davies's frequent adoption of a sensual gaze located in "the beautiful desirability of the male body" as an "agonized" desire that finds oblique expression in much of Davies's fiction ("Never Seek to Tell thy Love" 4). This is certainly the case, but as this passage from *The Red Hills* continues, Davies goes further to reveal the strange contradictory compatibility of male-bonding (taken to the sexually threatening extreme in Iorwerth's sensual gaze) and the "snarling" masculinity of the public world of daylight:

> And there was a curious friendliness among the men once they had descended the mine, an understanding that quietly eased the nerves, an unspoken bondage of protection towards each other which was beyond sentiment and peculiarly satisfying. It was only above that the snarling was expressed. 'Down-under,' the world was knit in comradeship. (*The Red Hills* 29)

Here, as elsewhere in Davies's fiction, the desire implied in Iorwerth's gaze is excluded by the policing of gender. This intense male bonding, this "peculiarly satisfying" "curious friendliness" must remain "sexless," and, in the public light of day, masculinity must be "snarlingly" reasserted and deviation policed.

This reassertion of masculinity often figures in Davies's fiction through representations of some of the besieged deviants whose experiences parallel Davies's feelings of otherness. An obvious example is the Gentleman Collier who appears in both *Print of a Hare's Foot* and *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*. The Gentleman Collier presents a public flaunting of gender codes and the discomfort that such deviance provokes. In *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*, he wears "a brown velvet jacket and a kind of knickerbockers with coloured stockings and buckled shoes" (19), and though he had tried to court several of the girls in town, "they were fluttered by his dandy oddness [and] didn't feel comfortable with him in the streets" (19). Roderick, the father of the shop-owning family whose history the novel follows, declares that he would "give a nice gold watch to any woman who'd walk as far as the post-office with the fop" (20). His "dandy oddness" is a discomforting public thwarting of convention that sets him apart from other men and removes him from the concourse of heterosexual exchange. In *Print of a Hare's Foot*, his oppositional nature and threatening male difference is even more apparent, and his alien manners are violently contrasted to the dominant masculinity of the community:

> There was no other like him. His landlady said he owned nine pairs of shoes which he polished as no other shoes had ever been polished. He wore smart jackets of maroon or green velvet, fanciful neckwear, kid gloves and no hat or cap on his long, carefully arranged Botticelli hair. Mrs Bowen Smallbag, the midwife, declared him a credit to the place. He was judged to have come from either England or America, but there was no traceable accent in his melodious diction. Working on the coalface in Number 1 pit of the Cambrian, he preferred the unfavoured night-shifts. He always chose his own groceries, his landlady cooking for him.
>
> It was approaching eleven o'clock when another lodger-customer, a bantam man swollen with Saturday-night bombast, lurched into the shop. Several excrescences always on his inflamed face had caused him to be nicknamed Jenkins Warts. A thickset, two-rooted beetroot of a man, for a moment he eyed the debonair Gentleman Collier with a lurking belligerence, suddenly gripped a fistful of his velvet jacket and gave him a push against the counter, behind which my mother stood.
>
> "I'm as good a man as you are!" he balled, and struck a fighting stance. (73)

Jenkins perceives the Gentleman Collier's presence as a personal insult. The Gentleman Collier's difference reflects threateningly on his challenger's sense of self. Jenkins attacks the Gentleman Collier (whose class transgression is implied in his name) in terms of status, but we are made aware that his difference is also a national one, despite the conspicuous lack of an accent. He has not simply taken on airs beyond the station of a collier, but has made a more fundamental move beyond the scope and ken of this Welsh working-class community. I argue that underwriting these differences in "class" and "nation" is a challenge to the stability of the gender constructions coterminous with a Welsh working-class identity. This interpretation is borne out by a deletion from the Gentleman Collier's description in a draft version of *Print of a Hare's Foot* in which the people of Blaenclydach describe him as having "his father's fixtures and his mother's tastes" (qtd. in Prys-Williams 36). Davies has not provided a random clashing of two men, but a charged arena of contested sites of masculinity that reveals the violent policing of acceptable forms of public masculinity. The Gentleman Collier's difference threatens the "sexless" sameness of the homosocial underground world of the pit.

For Davies, therefore, masculinity in working-class Wales was a narrowly defined and vigilantly defended construct. He could not identify with the available formulations of gender and any hope of indulging the sexual source of his difference was prohibited by the moral regime of nonconformity.

"A rainbow wash of the mind": Art and Sexuality

Davies understood that he could not explore his sexuality in his fiction. He recognized that it was not really the Welsh author's job to sell this particular vision. It is a revealing fact, therefore, that much of Davies's reimaginings of his life in his autobiographical writings replace his sexual difference with an artistic difference. The same art that he deployed to resist the market was deployed to resist the repressive forms of Welsh life that the market demanded.

The art that was so central to Davies's construction of an identity independent of the market was also a coded means of articulating his sexuality, a sexuality that was not only repressed by his South Wales context but by the mechanisms of literary culture as well. Even though it was his ability *to make a living* by writing that truly enabled his escape from the Rhondda, Davies characteristically imagined his *artistic* sensibility as the source of his difference and as the impetus of his escape from Blaenclydach. In effect, art was a proxy for his unexpressed queer difference.

Growing up in the Rhondda, Davies is a particularly good example of the need to construct an identity in a context where the resources to do so were completely lacking. As Sedgwick explains,

> gay people, who seldom grow up in gay families; who are exposed to their culture's, if not their parents', high ambient homophobia

> long before either they or those who care for them know that they are among those who most urgently need to define themselves against it;…have with difficulty and always belatedly to patch together from fragments a community, a useable heritage, a politics of survival or resistance. (81)

Davies's use of art in his resistance to the Rhondda is just such a patching-together of a useable identity—one that is deeply bound up in the emergence of the homosexual as a recognizable category and the rather anachronistic image of the dandy.

Davies's deployment of art in his autobiographical writings was the expression of well-established discourses of art, class and gender. Davies's movement away from the work and life of the Rhondda and toward art and literature was a clear movement away from working-class (and lower middle-class) associations and toward leisure-class ones. Artistic aspirations were not necessarily dependent upon, or essential to, industrial life and, therefore, somehow beyond it. Davies turned to art and, for a time, even adopted the persona of the dandy, which thereafter features as a prominent figure in much of his writing: Edgar Roberts in *Rings on Her Fingers* (1930), the Gentleman Collier, in both *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* (1941) and *Print of a Hare's Foot* (1968), Mr. Simon in "Wigs, Costumes, Mask" (1949), and Guy Aspen in *The Painted King* (1954), are all characters who owe much to the figure of the dandy.

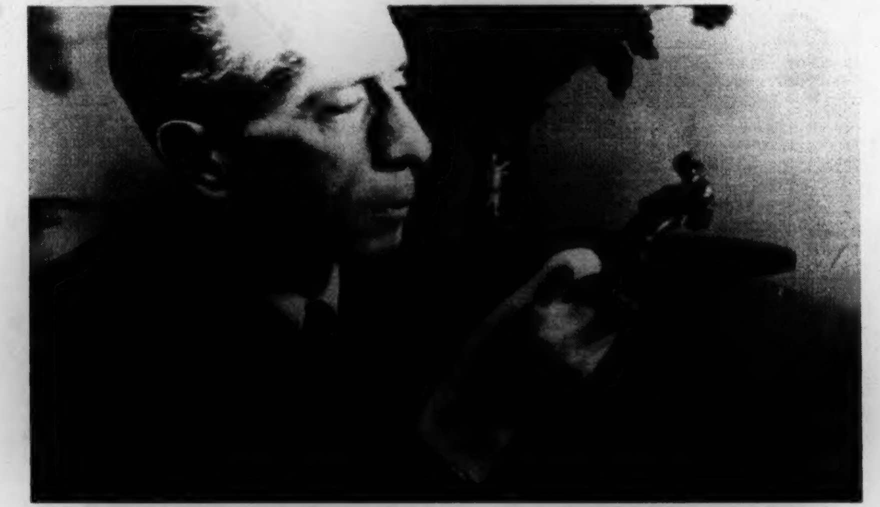


FIGURE 16: DAVIES EXAMINES A MALE NUDE WITH GREEK VASE IN BACKGROUND.

Alan Sinfield argues that creativity, art, and culture have long been associated with, first, femininity and, later, homosexuality. The dandy emerged in the nineteenth century along gendered class lines when the wealthy leisure class came under attack by their middle-class detractors. The perceived idleness of the leisure class was feminized in comparison to the earnest, industrious, and manly middle-class. The dandy was one form of leisure-class resistance to middle-class hegemony. The strategy was "to repudiate manly, middle-class authority by displaying conspicuous idleness, moral skepticism, and effeminacy; in other words, to be a dandy" (69). The dandy's same-sex association emerged "at the moment when the leisured, effeminate, aesthetic dandy was discovered in same-sex practices" (121), which were dramatically instantiated and publicly distributed through the trials of Oscar Wilde. By the time Davies adopted the image of the dandy, its leisure-class and sexual associations were well established. The eighth chapter of his autobiography is entitled "Spats and a Malacca Stick" for the dandified posture he began to adopt. In this chapter, Davies relates a failed sexual liaison with an older woman, delights in the "perverse yet truthful human beings" (95) of the Beardsley drawings of Wilde's *Salome*, writes "many dozens of Sapphics" (95), discovers "heady Swinburne" (95), is declared "an enigma" (95) by his father, and resolves to escape to London.

That Davies was aware of the dandy's meaning in British culture is only too clear when we encounter Edgar Roberts in *Rings on Her Fingers* (1930). Like the Gentleman Collier, Edgar is marked by the extravagance of clothing. In Edgar's case, his sexuality is inverted into a fetishization of women's clothing. Edgar returns from school "refined to the point of effeminacy" (49) with "gold-embroidered purple cushion-covers, *crepe-de-chine* pyjamas, an incense burner, and general air of velvet-footed superiority" (49). From "pince-nez" to "spats" he "was as elegant as a dolly" (49) and had developed a lisp. Heir to a draper's shop, Edgar is enamored of women's clothing. He longs for a woman "who would know why he loved silks and colours, why he was thrown into ecstatic passion by cunningly woven brocades and women's gowns fragile and delicate as the music of Mozart, why a rich sunset reminded him of garlands of marvelously dyed *crepe-de-chine* hung in the sky, how he would worship her, this remarkable woman" (66-67). Edgar is as removed from the realm of heterosexual desire as he is from masculine culture. He makes "few men friends" (54), finding the male population of the Valley "coarse and lurid" (54): the colliers are a "heated and loosened…thronging" (54) mass, and the middle-class section is composed of "card-players, footballers, more drunkards and fools" (54). Edgar laments that there was "no one with whom he could discuss the music of Debussy, the latest *chic* from Paris, the amorous palpitations of his soul" (54). Edgar relates to neither the rough working-class nor the superficial middle-class. His associations are aesthetic and elitist, and his manner is feminized, all in accordance with the established discourse of the modern queer.

Davies's deployment of this discourse is even more apparent when he opposes it to the masculine middle-class seriousness and worldliness that Edgar later adopts. Marriage and commercial success lead to an industriousness that replaces his dandified mean with "suits of commercial armour" (166). His wife, Edith, notices that he

> was becoming entirely the business man. She noticed that his face, which formerly had a sort of musing charm, had of late acquired a foxy commercial aspect. The glances that fell from his pince-nez were sharp and calculating, his lips were becoming a thin, hard line formed for the uttering of keen-edged business phrases, his nose seemed to be pinched in the fear that profits would not be so good this year as last. Even his attire had become more distinctly the drab and efficient garb of a commercial person. Gone were the silver and blue ties, the coy flower in his coat, the lavender-shaded trousers; gone his morning radiance when, fresh and gleaming, he tripped down to the shop after reading a verse or two of poetry. He chose now suits of depressing iron grey, or else wore a black coat, with black trousers through which ran a thin white stripe: a funeral garb that immediately chastened its beholder. (160)

As with the Gentleman Collier, Davies locates this Welsh dandy within a network of aestheticism, gender, class, and sexuality. Through Edgar, who goes from "tripping" around reading poetry to wearing the "chastening" clothes of a businessman, Davies outlines the intersections of class, culture, gender, and by extension, sexuality, that cohere around the dandy and that extend to his deployment of art in his life and career.

Accordingly, both *Print of Hare's Foot* and *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* depict Davies and Davies's counterpart, Penry, as following the artist's trajectory out of their limiting mining valleys and into the life of cosmopolitan London. Davies recalls that his earliest encounters with literature "whisked the Rhondda world away" (*POHF* 78). By fifteen, Davies had encountered Zola, Flaubert, Anatole France, Tolstoy, Beaudelaire, and Voltaire (*POHF* 79), and it is this world of fiction that speaks to his outsider's identity rather than the dominant forms of life surrounding him. In *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*, Penry makes the same escape. He tries to work in a local bank, but has "a feeling of having left his real self leaning against the door-post outside, where it patiently awaited his return" (203). He "had an obscure feeling of having been bamboozled into a dreary bondage he had not been aware of. He heard the clank of chains" (204). Like Davies's construction of himself in *Print of a Hare's Foot*, Penry's "real self" is found in literature. For him too books become his "truest solace" (227), and as he discovers "the French novelists, Balzac, Zola and Flaubert, and the Russian Tolstoy, in translation in the local miner's library....Their air of the great world blew over him in great refreshing waves" (227). Both Penry and Davies move through their communities and their narratives at an aesthetic remove, supplementing their industrial worlds with quotations of poetry and reminiscences of literary works.

Davies's use of art in *Print of a Hare's Foot* and *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* is closely connected to his undisclosed sexual identity. For instance, in *Print of a Hare's Foot*, tucked exactly between a quotation from *The Duchess of Malfi* and his list of his favourite French authors, Davies makes some fairly ambiguous statements: "The oyster shell of a boy's mind is forced open at random. Or he reaches to what he wants with a crab's oblique approach. I did not share my tastes with anyone; for street companions I preferred the simple boys who could even be called rough, and rarely discovered them to be rough" (78). One assumes that the "tastes" that Davies does not share are his literary ones. This makes sense, given that his "simple" and "rough" companions presumably would not relate to his artistic difference. But we are left guessing what exactly Davies must reach for "obliquely." I suggest that Davies's literary tastes are an oblique reaching for an unstated sexual desire: that Davies is relying upon the well-established association between the artistic, the feminine and the queer. The reference to "tastes" moves ambiguously into both literature and rough boys and the semi-colon between Davies's statement of his secret tastes and his choice of companions suggests a connection between the two. There is an association, therefore, between Davies's taste for literature and his taste for "rough" companions who he "never found to be rough."

Here we return to that idealized working class discussed in the previous chapter and see it in its fuller implication with Davies's sexuality and his preoccupation with his artistic value and his proper audience. The homoerotic tension in Penry's idolization of the miner, John, is accompanied by Penry's drunken poetic incontinence as he quotes from Shakespeare's sonnets, Glendower's "vasty deeps" speech in Henry IV, Part I, Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and from Thomas Campion's *Third Book of Airs* (*Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* 215-217). Penry's drunken poetic release culminates in a naked frolic in a pool. When Penry sees "the hard sculptured flesh of the young miner" (219), a "flame [runs] through him like a terror" (218). He likens John to the biblical David (218) and when "they [struggle] in a wild embrace…[coming] up chest to chest" (218), Penry discovers "the very secret of sensual savage joy" (219): "This was abandon" (218), Penry feels, and he is "jarred" (220) to hear shame in John's voice when their naked rough-housing is at an end. In his relationship with John, Penry, the young artist with a taste for poetry, more vividly illustrates the ambiguous "tastes" obliquely reached for in *Print of a Hare's Foot*.

As with Sinfield, Davies locates the cohesion of artistic extravagance with sexual extravagance in the discursive power of Oscar Wilde. While neither Penry nor Davies includes Oscar Wilde in their lists of authors who offered them release from their Rhondda worlds, Davies gives us reason to suspect the omission by including Wilde in an unpublished autobiographical piece written in 1946. By the time Davies wrote *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*, it is unlikely that he could have been unaware of Wilde's potent symbolic power as a signifier of homosexuality and I wonder what the omission might imply. For Wilde appears quite clearly just five years later in this piece that addresses the same literary escapes as *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* and *Print of a Hare's Foot*:

> Had read very few books—there were few in the Rhondda—but at age of fifteen a volume of Zola (translated) came into my hands, the first 'modern' novel for me to read; it amazed me and startled me. Thereafter I conceived a passion for French literature and my earliest influence was Anatole France whose complete works—in translation—I eventually acquired. This was followed by Flaubert (who cleaned up in me, I think, much of the meretricious element in A. France); Madame Bovary became for some years my Bible. I also read Balzac. But rarely an English novel, though Oscar Wilde fascinated me (probably because of the strong French influence in his work). This was all during my adolescence and was bound up in my instinctive urge to flee from the Rhondda Valley. (NLW MS 20897 E 1)

Davies dismisses his "fascination" with Wilde as purely academic, but it is in fact much more than that. That Wilde is either a fictional addition here or an omission from the analogous moments in *Tomorrow to Fresh Woods* and *Print of A Hare's Foot*, strongly indicates that Davies made an active decision in the deployment of Wilde within his life-story. Whether Wilde is an omission or an addition, Davies is sensitive to Wilde's value as a signifier of both aesthetic distance and sexual transgression.

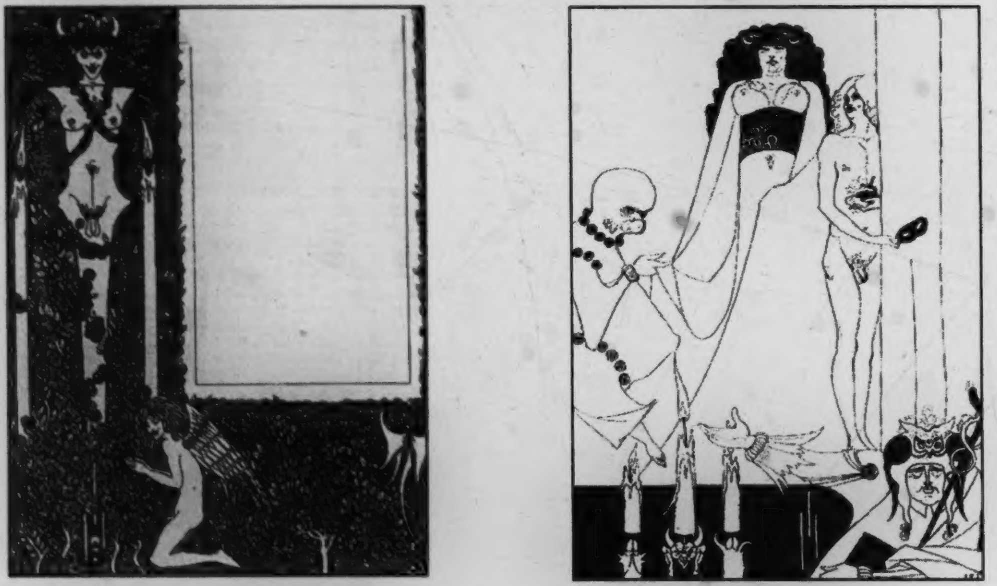
This unpublished piece is not the only moment where Davies refers to Wilde. The most unusual and difficult to resolve is a sudden and incongruous reference in "The Workers of Wales" chapter in *My Wales*:

> In London, Oscar Wilde was elegantly sauntering down the Haymarket dropping jewels of wit about Art for Art's sake, though by this time there was only a ghost of a carnation in his hand. He too was preaching revolt and was of a similar texture to the coal-miners, intrinsically. Carnation and coal-pick, art-revolt and labour agitations, gay and hard 'nineties! The old century was not

> going to be allowed to die as smugly and complacently as its apparent success warranted. (85)

Tony Brown regards this passage as indicative of Davies's very personal treatment of the Welsh industrial struggle as one "for personal freedom and fulfillment, for the right of the individual, miner or homosexual" ("Memory of Lost Countries" 80), rather than for economic freedom and fulfillment. It certainly demonstrates Davies's consistent preoccupation with an aesthetic world far removed from the industrial preoccupations of so much of his writing and might even derive from Davies's frequent eroticisation of working-class men. Davies imagines a connection between the artistic revolt of Wilde and the economic revolt of labour in a vain attempt to ameliorate his outcast experience with the history of Wales, but the effect is really to highlight the incongruity of the two worlds.

Wilde finds a more appropriate home in *Print of a Hare's Foot* where he is central to Davies's sexual liberation. As Barbara Prys-Williams claims, Wilde operates as a kind of substitute vocabulary for a knowledge that Davies either did not have words for then or would not put words to when writing his autobiography years later (Prys-Williams 110). An unsuccessful sexual encounter with a woman brings Davies to a sense of his sexual orientation, or at least of "something decisive belonging entirely to [his] own identity, unrelated to this woman" (92). Shortly after this unfulfilling heterosexual moment, Davies finds



Figures 17 and 18: Two of Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*: "Title Page" and "Enter Herodias."

consolation in an edition of *Salome* with the Beardsley drawings. The drawings more than the play itself "restored his nerves" (*Print* 95). He delights in the "perverse yet truthful human beings" (95) that set off "[r]andom little bombs…inside [him] with *secret* detonations" (italics added 95). He reads the book in bed and tells us that "[o]f course [he] consummated the revelation" (95). The second draft of *Print of a Hare's Foot* shows that Davies chose the word "consummated" over the original (and less subtle), "masturbated" (NLW 21533 C 123), making the sexually liberating value of Beardsley's *Salome*, and the erotic significance Davies ascribes to art in general, all the more evident.

The eroticism of Davies's escape into art is repeated with gusto in his encounter with Diaghilev's Russian Ballet when he is finally liberated into the bohemian world of London as a young man:

> The curtain rose on an item entitled Contes russes. Its eruption of barbarically primary colours gave much more than visual impact; colour shot down the throat, attacked the spine, poked up an erotic tumult. The dancers leapt with extraordinary abandon or stood flower-still with classic grace. Best of all was the last item, the balls-shaking Prince Igor, its warriors dancing as only Russians can dance those Polovtsian exuberances. Diaghilev gave his ballets a signature and triumphant dash I was not to see equalled, their predominant sensuality achieving a purity which reached the androgynous. They were a Slav fusion of robust flesh become colour and running lines of poetry.... After life in the Rhondda Valley the heap of ballets I saw was a rainbow wash of the mind. They assisted at liberation. (*Print of Hare's Foot* 109)

This is not simply an aesthetic wonder but a physically, "balls-shaking" "erotic tumult" and "fusion of robust flesh [and]…running lines of poetry" that finally and forever wash the Rhondda repressions from Davies's imagination, though not entirely from the fiction upon which he would build his career.

Policings: Knowledge and Silence

Davies was painstakingly silent about his homosexuality because the fictional context in which he made his career made any overt treatment of queer themes impossible. The insightful "resistances" that his Welsh subject *did* enable do not amount to much in Davies's complete oeuvre and many of these instances must be interrogated before they appear as distinctly queer. For the most part, Davies's métier when it comes to his homosexuality is silence. Barbara Prys-Williams's research in to the drafts of Davies's autobiography reveals the layers of self-editing and even out-and-out lying characterizing Davies's production of his public self. This self-consciousness results in a "very coded autobiographical utterance, at times in outright censorship as he constructs the sort of textual self that he is prepared to allow others to see" (Prys-Williams 22). He is particularly cautious regarding sexuality and entire episodes dealing with homosexual scenes and characters were deleted along with phrases like "frustrated queer" and even, "Well I'm buggered" (Prys-Williams 36). As Davies wrote in a 1958 piece for the "Our Contributors" series in *Wales* magazine, "The blankness of the page waiting for notes about myself is more dismaying than page 1 of a projected new book. Temptations for exhibitionism! So much to conceal, evade, touch-up! Stolid facts such as 'Born 1903 in Blaenclydach, Rhondda,' where I lived for eighteen years, seem to be unnecessary" (7). And in fact, after Davies has told us about himself in all of his autobiographical pieces, after he has presented himself in all of his public images as a writer, it is the "blankness of the page" which confronts us most emphatically. For Davies was an able exhibitionist and performer of his public identity. Even the purportedly "stolid fact" of his birth in 1903 is a "touch-up," for according to the school register of Porth County School, Davies was born in 1901 (Owen Vernon Jones 68). Davies, more comfortable, it seems, with his fictions, cannot provide a "straightforward" and "unfrightened" account of himself and we must content ourselves with reading into what silences and "blanknesses" he offers.

Davies's silence, however, was not an unselfconscious one. While many of his queer characters come to us with the greatest obliquity, in several cases, the silence practiced in his writing is reflected in the silence imposed upon his characters and himself. "The Doctor's Wife" (1931), for instance, depicts the complete incomprehensibility of homosexual love within the heteronormative world. The story concerns a husband's misrecognition of his wife's disinterest in his affections as proof that she is carrying on an affair with some young man. In truth, the doctor's wife is a lesbian. And while she *is* engaged in an affair, it is not, as the doctor suspects, with a young man, but with her "best friend," the social worker, Agnes Wright. So complete is the epistemological absence of homosexuality in this story that even when the doctor, intent on catching his wife with her lover, surprises the couple kissing in Agnes's home, he is blind to the truth:

> He drew back and went slowly and softly to the door. His head hung down a bit sheepishly. He felt he had intruded on something rather beautiful where he had no business. He realized the close friendship that existed between Agnes and Phoebe. It was nice and unusual to see two women so fond of each other. And he admired Agnes as a fine social worker, in spite of her over-shadowing of Phoebe's personality. He had seen them, through the chink, kissing each other is such a sweet way. He felt ashamed. He would, however, go in, he would be very nice to them. He would forget his suspicions for a moment. (144)

This is the moment of revelation, lost on the doctor, and perhaps on one or two readers as well. Even when Phoebe leaves her husband to live with Agnes in London, he never imagines that Phoebe and Agnes are lovers. The closest he comes to realization is the dim feeling that arises when speaking to Agnes of his appreciation for the friendship between her and his wife: "The pale gleam behind Agnes's eyes became brighter as she looked into the Doctor's eyes. Her strong handsome face was lifted up close to his and he thought there was something queer about her expression, a flash of something that repelled him for the moment" (139). This is the closest he comes to knowledge and the closest Davies comes to naming the desire underlying this story.

A similar instance of unknowing is found in the 1933 story, "The Romantic Policewoman." In this instance, it is the policewoman protagonist, Ella Dobson, who misrecognizes her own desires until the very end of the story. Ella rescues a "fallen" girl, Kathleen, from the streets whom she thereafter tries to redeem. Ella's attentions to Kathleen, however, mask her true desires for a romantic relationship with another woman. Ella's professional duties as a policewoman signal that she is trapped within the very authority that she represents. She is *self*-policing and her own desires are in conflict with her authoritarian, prescriptive role as the representative of the "rules and regulations" (200, 206) that prohibit homosexuality: "She was doing useful, even noble work. Yet...yet it was so impersonal: rules and regulations were such cold dead things" (200). Ella is one of the many figures of legal authority hovering around Davies's "deviant" characters. Doris of "Doris of Gomorrah" (1933) considers "giv[ing] information" (235) about an obviously gay (though not explicitly identified) character to Scotland Yard. The libertine dandy costume dealer in "Wigs, Costumes, Masks" (1949), Davies's most elusive and illusive queer character, is pursued throughout the story by two detectives for some vaguely defined crime which might be insurance fraud and might be something else involving a man named Elmer Calvert. Even the doctor of "The Doctor's Wife" engages in acts of surveillance, however futile his epistemological shortcomings render the attempt. Davies's novels dealing in crime and murder carry the presence of these authority figures into *Under the Rose*, *Marianne*, and *Nobody Answered the Bell*, the last of which is also the story of a lesbian love affair. Ella is the only overtly self-policing character and the only one who is unable to "give information" to herself. Ella claims that she is "a policewoman, but [she has] a soul of [her] own too" (205). Recalling "Nightgown," this *liberated* soul appears magically from beneath her uniform in "the delicate rose and pink of [her] underthings" (204). But again, the lesbianism is never named, and Davies leaves the true motives of Ella's concern for Kathleen muted and absent.

The reader must be an investigative one to discern Ella's motives and it is no coincidence that Ella is an investigative figure who challenges us by her inability to investigate herself. When Kathleen abruptly leaves, Ella begins to search for her, and a "scheme of detective work [forms] in her mind" (209). Imagining that she is on a mission to save Kathleen from the cruel masculine world, she tracks the girl to her former lover. When Ella tries to liberate Kathleen, Kathleen's lover grows angry and reveals the truth of Ella's motives. But the text of the story never explicitly states Ella's implied homosexuality and so never completely releases the repressed truth that carries the narrative, and we are left in a kind of unknowing knowledge:

> 'God Almighty, I've had enough of this,' he snarled. 'Policewoman or no, *I'll let you know what I know*—' He lowered his face, alive with a derisive contempt, and began to hiss almost into Ella's mouth words that turned her to stone. Kathleen shrunk back, white and helpless. He finished with an epithet that turned Ella's blood cold with a fear new to her. Then he lifted his shoulders, flashed her a look of warning, and stretched his arm protectively to Kathleen. They left the cafe.
>
> She sat gazing before her as if stricken. For some moments there prowled in her eyes the terror of *revelation*. (italics added 213)

Ella now *knows* what Kathleen's lover *knows* but can we be sure that *we* know? What has been revealed that is so terrifying to this representative of rules and regulations and the authorities that monitor and safeguard the moral order of behavior? "The Romantic Policewoman" is a narrative act of silenced knowledge whose revelation is hidden within the story's logic of repression. This enactment of sexual silence is Davies's simultaneous policing of his writing and revelation of that policing.

"The vanishing trick": Performing the Silence of the Marketplace in *The Painted King*

Davis's sexuality was largely silenced and his first obligations were always to the market and to the various public images he adopted. Even when writing *The Painted King*, a novel based on the life of the gay playwright and actor Ivor Novello he never discloses the homosexuality underwriting the narrative and its central character, Guy Aspen. But this silence is significantly enacted in a professional context that resembles Davies's experience. In place of a personal, internal existence, Guy has a very extravagant public and professional existence. He is a dedicated professional who circulates with ease within the networks of production, dissemination and reception that make up the theatre business, and he is a popular commodity whose romantic public image mirrors the repetitive roles of his romantic plays. Guy, therefore, is as professionally closeted as Davies, and *The Painted King* is a representation of the performance of that closeting.

Guy's character operates in that tension between revelation and repression—between knowing and unknowing—that characterizes so much of Davies's writing on sexuality, and especially gay sexualities. Davies's representation of almost all of his queer characters illustrates Sedgwick's discussion of homosexuality in *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Sedgwick argues that knowledge and ignorance simultaneously inform the sexual, where one can stand in for and invoke the other. She argues that

> a lot of the energy of attention and demarcation that has swirled around issues of homosexuality since the end of the nineteenth century...has been impelled by the distinctively indicative relation of homosexuality to wider mappings of secrecy and disclosure, and of the private and the public, that were and are critically problematical for the gender, sexual, and economic structures of the heterosexist culture at large. (71)

According to Sedgwick, maintaining heteronormative patriarchal hegemony requires both a knowing and an unknowing of homosexual practice which she describes as "the occluded intersection between a minority rhetoric of the 'open secret' or glass closet and a subsumptive public rhetoric of the 'empty secret'" (164). Homosexuality has been both known and controlled and simultaneously shunned and denied, and therefore produced in a context of simultaneous knowing and unknowing. This process is what led Foucault to claim that sex is "ostentatiously" hidden, or silenced "by formulating the matter in the most explicit terms" (9). To return to Forster's unpublished *Maurice*, Forster describes homosexuality as existing between, at first, "ignorance and terror" (240) and secondly, "familiarity and contempt" (240), and claims that "what the public really loathes in homosexuality is not the thing itself but having to think about it" (240). Davies's queer expressions operate along just such an epistemological faultline where the undisclosed is still known even as it is controlled and silenced. *The Painted King*, like "The Romantic Policewoman" and "The Doctor's Wife," is both an instance of this public silencing and an enactment of this undisclosed knowing. It speaks the silence of a sexuality that appears obliquely in the aporias of Guy's public performance of identity. And Guy is, in words that Sedgwick uses to describe *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, an especially compelling example of "the conjunction of an extravagance of deniability and an extravagance of flamboyant display" (*Epistemology* 165). Guy, who is never identified as a gay man and who is, therefore, granted deniability, is caught in the "swirls of totalizing knowledge-power that circulate so violently around any but the most openly acknowledged gay male identity" (*Epistemology* 164). He is consistently portrayed in terms of an unmentioned absence, or loss of selfhood, which is simultaneously *known* within the logic of the narrative, but never explicitly divulged to the reader.

For Guy, the costumed king of the popular theatre, truly exists in a world of flamboyant and extravagant display. He is the actor who constantly performs other roles while suppressing his own "soul," increasingly removed from any true selfhood beneath the performances that come to define his life. He wonders if he has "only rehearsed life—occasionally performed it" (213) and Judith describes his acting as a "vanishing trick into a role" (214), echoing Davies's claim to the artistic ability of abandoning himself to the demands of his fiction in "Every Genuine Writer." But exactly what has vanished is never divulged. Narrated as the novel is through Guy's virginal and devoted confidant, Judith Cottar, the reader never gains insight into the private world behind Guy's performances both on and off the stage. "It is theatre, not life," Jorgen explains. And the novel never really enters into life: "Another show, another assembling, with staggering labour, of stuff that vanished into thin air: except for the money this gossamer earned, of course" (216). And in this theatrical world of flamboyant display, silences are all the more audible. Judith reflects that on the stage "a good play was a compact of action and talk, even a pause loaded with meaning" (197) and thinks that Guy's "life had become like that" (197). And in these pauses and loaded silences we may identify *The Painted King*'s queer subtext, for the silences are gaps in the reader's knowledge (or Judith's) that are never gaps in the knowledge of most of the characters, and Davies consistently fails to disclose information that is common knowledge between his characters. Further, this lack of disclosure is often performed in the very act of speaking; in dialogue that is explicitly about an unarticulated *something*.

Davies establishes a knowing presence that highlights the reader's ignorance very early in the novel. The event has very little to do with the subsequent action of the novel and serves only to set the epistemological tone for the subsequent development of Guy's undisclosed queerness. Before Judith meets Guy, she fails in seducing a young activist named Harold. Despite her best seductive efforts, the object of her desire does not respond. Judith wonders at the "blankness of his face!" (27) and cannot identify the reasons for his disinterest: "Had he been magnificently tactful, pretending to be unaware? Or merely shut away in a political ego which vibrated only to public causes, impervious to the sweet needs of private love—yes, yes, it was that (34). Judith protests too much and sounds as self-deceiving as "The Romantic Policewoman," Ella Dobson. Judith is so desperate to explain Harold's disinterest that we can be reasonably certain that she's got it wrong.

Our suspicions are confirmed when the moment of "revelation" arrives and Harold is discovered by Judith's landlady, Mrs. Blow. Landladies feature prominently in Davies's writing and occupy a powerful position on the boundaries of the public and private, the known and the secret. In *Print of a Hare's Foot* he describes them with some disdain:

> The soulless slatterns of central London (in the outer areas they were much less dehumanized) who let these rooms were of advanced accomplishment in bitchiness. Keyhole spies, they were also gifted with baleful second sight and the ears of cats. Experts in the bestowal of humiliation, they loured up from nether regions or a room next to the front door, and, by a single look, could plant cowering guilt in the fresh mind of a country boy or girl. Sometimes, according to their depraved notions, they were justified. (114-115)

The name, Mrs. Blow, also reappears in *Print of a Hare's Foot* as the woman who catches Davies stealing fruit from her pear tree, and whom Davies pees on in terror. Prys-Williams identifies the name of this "autobiographical" character as a fictional revision, so we may see this childhood experience of fruit-stealing-feminine-terror as subtly linked with the landlady's guilt-bestowing powers of perception. Accordingly, in *The Painted King*, Harold becomes swathed in layers of knowledge and ignorance: specifically, the landlady's knowledge and the reader's ignorance. Judith "had not yet learned that all landladies possess second sight" (28), and Mrs. Blow's knowledge is central to the secret of the text. As Judith and Harold attempt to sneak past Mrs. Blow's door, she bursts into the landing declaring, "I *thought* so!" (28). She *knows* what the text only obliquely refers to, and what Judith seems to misrecognize, or deny. After Harold has left, Judith weepingly exclaims, "It's not true! It's not true!" (28). We do not know what "it" is, but Mrs. Blow apparently does:

> "What!" she exclaimed, and gave her lodger another close, all-embracing look.
>
> "It's not true."
>
> "My God," whispered Mrs. Blow. "The big tyke! I believe you're speaking the truth...My God," she remarked as her lodger, shatteringly disorganized, crept into the cozy parlour, "a big, strapping fellow like him.... All the same," she warned, "I won't have them going in and going out; let this be a warning to you." (28-29)

The important point in our lack of knowledge here is the strong impression that Mrs. Blow and, to a lesser degree, Judith herself, are aware of the nature of the obliquely referred to "it" that lies behind Harold's "blankness" (27).

Harold plays no role in the rest of the novel so his queerness is never clearly divulged. However, the same undisclosed revelation surrounds Guy. The old actress, Vera, speaks of Guy to Judith with the same kind of silenced knowing that characterizes Mrs. Blow's speech:

> "You're still devoted to Everybody's Dearest? Yes, of course you are.... Such charm! It's always there like a fragrance...or a curse." The bells in her voice tolled. "Terrible when we are smitten with *them*. Them that can't give to us. Darling Guy. Who has he got now? I've been out of gossip on tour...though I never listen to gossip about people's sex life, it's always so spiteful and built up, from jealousy. No, don't tell me. You're loyalty itself."
>
> "Guy has little time for that sort of play. On the whole he's abstemious, I believe."
>
> "So far," Vera resumed, "I've never had the luck to fall for one of *those* charmers." (119)

It is difficult to ignore the vague yet loaded "*them*" and "*those*," and the passage is marked by a desire to both know and not know; knowledge is the subject of conversation and we are therefore more aware of our lack of knowledge. This tension recurs in a later dialogue between Judith and Guy's mother:

> "There's no other woman. At least as far as I know." [Judith said.]
>
> "There isn't. There hasn't been."
>
> The pause became a loaded silence. Madame Annie ate a glacé cherry from a tiny Chinese bowl of them on the bedside table. "Moving about the world as I have done," she observed at last, in a theoretic tone, "meeting all sorts of people, I've learned to keep not only my tongue still but my prejudices."
>
> "Yes." Judith gazed out the window. "Prejudices are hopeless—and self-destructive."
>
> "We've got to bear with such men," Madame Annie repeated. "After all, if it's not one thing with a man it's another." Judith still remaining silent, she went on, in a particularising tone (and Judith was beyond surprise by then): "It's best to see them as wonderful comics sent to amuse us. The world's a sad place, my girl. There's room for men and women that *can't* fit in. Nature will see to it that the balance is kept in favour of the others." (147)

Madame Annie is sure that not only isn't there a woman, but there "hasn't been" one. She is vague, but the silence is "loaded" and we are meant to be aware of the knowledge that we are deprived of. We must read into the vague nomenclature of "such men," reminiscent of Vera's "*those*" and "*them*." We are meant to ask in what way can't such men and women as Guy fit in, and what could require the reservation of prejudice? Obviously, we are dealing with Guy's unstated sexuality. His queer identity is displayed precisely through these oblique resistances to disclosure. As a secret, Guy's sexuality is an open one that the characters of the novel empty of signification.

Guy's popular public persona is unwaveringly heterosexual. He is a romantic icon and sex symbol who would obviously have had closet himself. The text of the novel never completely opens the closet door on Guy's private life: What interests me most about Davies's representation of Guy is not simply Guy's (and by extension Davies's) closeting, but that, for the first time in Davies's writing, he places that closeting in direct relationship to the marketed identity of the professional artist. This novel, whose queer subtext is so emphatically elided and revealed, also explores those professional anxieties central to Davies's career.

The world that Guy Aspen occupies is the world of the light theatre where discourses of art and popular entertainment rub shoulders; where the less material ambitions for "fame" are in conflict with "making one's fortune." *The Painted King* is a novel that extravagantly displays the networks of the artist's professional life. It is, as even the dust jacket proclaims, "crowded with actors and actresses, managers, composers, agents, critics and journalists" (front flap). The theatre in which Guy comes to perform is "large enough to hold not only those of the profession free to attend, and the commercial back-room people, the film gang, the first night social crowd, the Press and the large tribe of theatrical hangers on, but also a sizeable mass of the non-descript public—the final arbiters" (*The Painted King* 234). And *The Painted King* was marketed to the same popular audiences that it depicts. Heinemann emphatically touted its appeal, claiming that "its subject will inevitably command a far wider public than [Davies] has ever reached before" (front flap). This advertisement suggests that Davies's novel would draw to itself some of the popular appeal of the light theatre it represents. To this effect, the dust jacket depicts a full-cover splash page of a theatre stage, gallery and balconies almost replacing the look of the book with its popular theatrical subject. Heinemann published *The Painted King* with a first printing of 10, 000 copies, maintaining the high first printing reached only by his last novel, *Marianne* (Heinemann Ledgers 1948-1958 RHAL). Unlike *Marianne*, which sold over 9000 copies, *The Painted King* failed to break 8000 (JP to ADE Oct. 2 1958 RHAL) and his next novel, *The Perishable Quality*, was reduced to a printing of 7000. Still, nearly 8000 copies is a large sale for one of Davies's novels. In addition to this large printing, *The Painted King* was a Book Society recommendation. The Book Society was inspired by the success of The Book-of-the-Month Club in America and founded by a Heinemann board member, Alexander Frere-Reeves, with a selection committee and manager that were partly culled from Heinemann's writers and staff (St. John 241-242). Whether or not there were a disproportionate number of Heinemann titles in their recommendations is uncertain, but regardless, a book club inspired by the Book-of-the-Month Club had its detractors and any book that bore a Book Society stamp was considered by many to cater to the lowest common denominator.

Throughout the novel, Guy's professionalism and popular appeal are challenged by the same artistic discourses encountered by Davies. Guy's close friend, the photographer Jorgen Brokholm is the committed and "serious" modern artist who is "going to make photography new again" (13) and who regards Guy's music as trivial cant with lyrics that are fit only "for the servants" (8). He believes Guy's art should aspire to the poetry of Shelley or it should "collect the pictures and music of the open street. Buses and fire-engines!...The public-houses!" (7). But Guy's political gestures are dubious. After the failure of *Romeo and Juliet*, he decides to write his next play about communists, proclaiming that it is "the age of the common man" and that the "Theatre must be brought up to date" (137). But this awareness is coupled with his belief that communism is "fashionable" (137). Similarly, when Guy finally does decide to go down into the streets for his subject, as Jorgen goaded him to do years earlier, he is doubtful: "But I mustn't be coarse,...My public can't take it" (191). We are likely not very far from Davies's struggles with the "grumblings" that he felt his public expected of him as a Welsh writer.

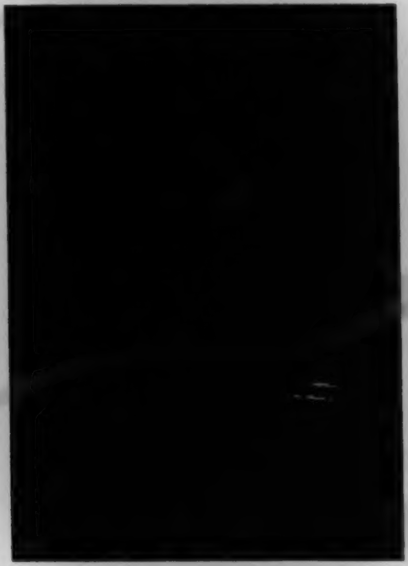


FIGURE 19: FRONT COVER OF DUST JACKET OF *THE PAINTED KING* (1954).

Just as dubious are Guy's gestures toward artistic legitimacy. Like Davies, Guy is prone to a dandified approach to life and bouts of artistic insecurity. Guy's dandyism is particularly evident in his flare for clothing. When we first meet him he is sitting at a Steck grand piano "wearing a moujik's shirt of white silk" (6), and he later appears in an overcoat with a "deeply astrakhan" (71) collar or "an elaborate dressing gown of brocade" (62). We discover from his mother that he loved her hats (41), which, as a child, he used to try on along with her furs (151). Judith, perhaps unaware of her perception, mocks Guy's love of his mother's clothing, asking, "Her dresses were too unmanageable, Guy?" (151), to which Guy's campy response is a giggle and, "There's my darling Judith!" (152). Along with this clothing fetish, Guy's "dandy oddness" is contrasted with a businessman-like responsibility, and Guy operates in the same feminine/art and masculine/earnestness binary found in Edgar Roberts of *Rings on Her Fingers*. Judith had "learned to accept…the dual elements of [Guy's] temperament—the energetic male professionalism, go-getting in hardness, and the dexterously feminine sensitivity that could cull from both sexes what he needed creatively for an emotion, a scene, a line, a role" (112). This is the contrast, essentially, between the market's demands and "pure art," which is also the conflict between Guy's public responsibilities and his sexual difference.

Whatever artistic aspirations Guy might have are as quelled by his professional life as his queerness is. When the artist in Guy wanders from the path of his popular plays and determines to *do* Shakespeare in a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, the play flops because he cannot make the sacrifices that "true art" demands: Judith urges him to "[s]pend half the money" (106) he would on his other plays in an effort to "[l]ose [his] public and find another lot" (106), but Guy refuses, claiming that he "is expected to be gorgeous" and that he " [does] want to wear *hats*, darling" (106). Guy is not so committed to art-for-art's-sake so much as he is to the conspicuous display of his popular image. Art, like the dandified posture he adopts, is an incomplete resistance to his public persona and commitments. He does not share, for instance, Davies's youthful enthusiasm for the liberating power of ballet, and a performance that bears striking resemblances to Davies's reminiscence of Diaghilev's Russian ballet goes unnoticed by Guy: "On the stage, among smoky crimson and yellow tents, warriors abandoned themselves to the blaze of movement and laughing young blood. Legs were put to magnificent use. The barbaric soldiers hit their bows against the ground, leapt and revolved among primary firework colours" (32). Diaghilev attends the ballet in person that night, but Guy dismisses it all as too "highbrow" (30) and is too busy making connections for the production of his first play to partake in the cultural fare.

The strongest proponent of art-for-art's sake in the novel is Guy's domineering and jealous mother, Madame Annie Aspen, a once famous and now declining singer and choirmaster. Madame Annie is a martyr to her art who scorns her dependence upon money but courts fame with a ruthless passion. Guy explains his mother's propensity toward debt as the result of her "artistic temperament" (41), and appropriately the careerist woman advises her son to pay no heed to financial considerations: "You'll never get anywhere if you waste time worrying about a lot of petty debts" (19). These words resemble Davies's advice to the young writer, George Bullock, years earlier: "Why worry about finance?

I've ceased to (or pretend to myself I have)...Refuse to make yourself pale over money" (RD to GB 2 Aug. 1940 HRHRC). Madame Annie is the eternal artist expending herself in bringing beautiful things to the world: "What do a lot of silly debts matter if the whole world is in your debt" (143). She is anxious that Guy's legacy be more than a collection of light plays and consistently advises him to write a great and serious opera.

Judith is impatient with Madame Annie's operatic dreams for Guy, pointing out that "[o]peras would have meant ...a stony little Cornish cottage...a toasted herring for lunch" (143). Judith enters the novel as an aspiring journalist and ends up serving as Guy's personal secretary and press agent. She has a large part in presenting Guy's image to his audience—of marketing him to his public. The image she helps to support is of course the most marketable one, a superficial catering to the most lucrative demand, as is evident in an article she writes for "a popular women's periodical" (139). When Guy advises Judith not to be "too much of a journalist" (139), enslaved to facts, but that she communicate his "*soul*" (139) with the "imaginative truth" (139) found "in any creative art" (139), Judith dismisses his effusions with the marketer's steady eye on a product's proper market: "There's no place for your soul, Guy dear; your personal photographs are to take up two pages in the magazine...Let us leave your soul for another public" (140). Even the notes that Judith takes as Guy composes his plays are set down in "reporter's pads" (168). Between Judith's journalistic interest in selling Guy's public image, Madame Annie's pursuit of fame over fortune, and Jorgen's commitment to aesthetic and political purity in art, we have the range of Davies's engagement with the discursive contexts of his career.

Guy himself emerges as the committed and unapologetic professional, and through him Davies clearly lays out many of the professional preoccupations of his career. In this sense, *The Painted King* is semi-autobiographical. Despite his occasional outbursts over "creative art" (139), "imaginative truth" (139) and "the common man" (137), Guy is a professional artist well aware of the demands of his public: "I know what I want to do, I know what I *can* and what I cannot. I want to serve the simple in heart. Other people besides those that read Shelley are entitled to have their poets and musicians. *I* shall feed them" (9). Guy's commitments are middle and lowbrow. His audiences consist "almost exclusively of suburban matrons accompanied by dragged-in-looking husbands and young courting couples undergoing a night out in the West End" (55). Guy is a popular artist who serves up a tried and tested marketable formula for the length of his career.

But he does so at a great personal cost to himself. Maintaining his public image leads him to an early grave. He maintains a Dorian Grey youthfulness throughout his life but begins to crack from the inside, eaten away by an unidentified illness associated with his anus, but also spiritually eroded by the loss of selfhood. Guy wearies of the effort of maintaining his public persona and retreats from the public fearing that he is "not alive without grease paint on [and only] alive in the dressing room-mirror" (211). He regards his illness as the result of his public display, which has corrupted him somehow on the *inside*: "the *effort* of remaining young for stage purposes—it reacts in a strange way; it both succeeds and takes vengeance by ageing one in a peculiar *inside* way" (212). Davies presents Guy as having missed out the benefits of displaying his interior, private life, which he has therefore lost. Guy desperately wants to "step out of the mirror and find someone *there*!" (214). But his performative repression has robbed him of interiority. He has no nightgown to retreat to and there is no revelation of selfhood, only the theatrical production of a professional identity.

As I have argued, there is good reason to suspect that *The Painted King* was regarded as being as trivial and tasteless as the world of light theatre it described. But I do not think that Davies intended to be trivial and I regard *The Painted King* as a strong representation of the performance of the closet in professional circumstances not far from Davies's. Guy is a tragically public figure whose life is lived entirely as a performance and who never achieves a private internal identity separable from the conspicuous display of his public persona. The loss of the private self in the public performance is a metaphor for Davies's professional closeting as a writer of the Welsh working class. As with Davies's, Guy's gay sexuality is a conspicuous silence, but in Guy's case this absence is charged by the otherwise extravagant presence of his flamboyant public identity. The unstated casualty of Guy's public image is a sexuality that Davies has himself silenced in this novel that will "inevitably command a far wider public than he has ever reached before" (front flap). To put it another way, this novel that so emphatically depicts the world of professional art reveals not only Guy's performative silence but also the process of its silencing, the very mechanisms of the systemic unknowing that were a defining influence in Davies's career.

It is remarkable that Davies's career, which was so strongly governed by expectations imposed from the external influences of reviewers, publics, and publishers, should manage to say so much about gay sexuality while saying so little. When confronted with the culture industry's volubility on Davies's relationship to nation, class and gender, its silence on his queer identity and subjects is a powerful absence. Davies was so obviously and clearly a writer of Wales and of the Welsh working class; he was even, perhaps, obviously a women's writer; but he was never singled out as a queer writer. This neglect is because, in his complete *oeuvre*, his queer themes and characters do not appear so clearly as they do when singled out by analysis. When his queer characters and stories are found they are mostly half-told, disguised, or forever vanishing into the very act of their appearance. For Davies likely could not afford to appear in public as a gay man. The writing that he lived by could not have accommodated it. Davies's conflation of art with his queer sexuality opposed the repressive religious and gender codes of his youth, challenged the Welsh subject of his fiction, and was bound up in his resistance to the market upon which he depended throughout his career. But in *The Painted King*, Davies tells us that he was aware of the professional nature of his silenced sexuality, and that art was not, in the end, liberating, for it served a greater master.

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Afterword

I have not been entirely fair to Davies. My original interest in him had everything to do with the complex insights his fiction provided into the intersections of nation, class, gender, and sexuality. Once I began my archival research, however, a different Davies began to take shape. This Davies was not an abstracted and authoritative narrative voice conjuring Wales and peopling it with characters who challenged the master narratives of Welshness or refigured Welsh history. Rather, he was a young writer struggling to make his name and, more simply, to feed himself. He was a self-conscious artist ranting against rejection letters, poor sales, and bad reviews. Or he was the published author writing condescendingly to young writers with the same pen that he wrote humbly to respected reviewers. He was a man who was insecure about his professional life; in short, he was a man to whom I could relate.

So, it was this professional side of Davies's life that began to fascinate me. I therefore made this aspect of his identity, rather than the themes developed in his fiction, the focus of my dissertation. There is, however, a whole other dissertation in treating Davies on his own terms, for I believe he did have much to say about the complexity of the purportedly stable category, "Welsh." He had much to say about the place of class in Welsh history and culture. He had much to say about Wales' masculine identity and the place of women in the Welsh nation. He had much to say about the growth of queer life and knowledge on seemingly stony cultural ground. At times, as in the case of The Gentleman Collier, all of these insights come powerfully together to redefine one another.

But I had found a far more menial way of examining Davies: a way that strove to find the clay feet of this authorial voice. In doing so I have come dangerously close to oversimplifying Davies's writing. It was never my intention to do so. My intention was not to reduce the complexity of what he did achieve, but to inflect it with a set of concerns that are not readily apparent in his writing alone. I chose to focus on Davies as a professional writer because we are not accustomed to thinking of authors in this way. We think of them as artists, or powerful cultural forces, or contributors to discourses, or products of cultures, or irrelevant producers of texts, or what have you. But we rarely see them as people dealing with more or less the same mundane concerns as ourselves; or, if we do, their lives rarely have much to do with what they write except, perhaps, as raw material for their literary creation. I have argued that what and how Davies wrote was partly influenced by being a writer: that his books cannot be held apart from the stories of their production, circulation and reception: that an important nuance is lost if we forget that writers are only one of the components in the networks that deliver literature into culture.

So when Davies began his career by changing his name and writing in the style of Caradoc Evans, adding, as he claimed "a Welsh leek" to the Progressive Bookshop coterie, he launched his career along well trodden paths of the literary market. He found a niche to launch his career. For at least the first half of this career, a large part of his appeal and perseverance was because he was writing Wales for an English audience that had a taste for literature dealing with their alien little neighbours, especially if it was romantic and exotic, or a little scandalous, or black with miners. It was in this vein that Heinemann took Davies on, and in this vein that they tried to keep him, despite Davies's growing discomfort with the dubious aesthetic achievement of being a marketably Welsh writer.

Davies found one outlet for legitimacy in the working-class themes of his novels. In the hard years leading up to the second world war, when South Wales was one of the bleakest regions of Britain, people were curious about the harsh living conditions in the gray industrial valleys and turned to writers like Davies. But Davies was poorly equipped to provide a bleak realist picture of depressed Wales. He was far more at home in the green mountains of the Welsh past before nonconformity and industrialization produced the modern Wales that Davies fled as a young man. Davies fled Wales in the artist's search for beautiful things and when he looked back at his Welsh home and its miners, they took on some of that beauty. For Davies's representations of class had as much to do with his self-conscious notions of artistic value as they did with any political urgency. Classes were to him, not simply classes, but readerships as well; he imagined them in ways that confirmed his negotiation of his anxious position between the material and the aesthetic, and they are all in some way part of his repudiation of a mass readership threatening to reduce his life work to triviality.

While it may have been difficult to cope with the expectations that Davies's market had of his Welsh and working-class themes, it was almost impossible to cope with his sexual themes in a way that would make meaning of his gay experience. Davies's treatment of gender in an oppressively male working-class context was one way of exploring some of that experience. His construction of a pagan and prenonconformist Welsh past was another way. But never did Davies feel that it was his job to write an "unfrightened" homosexual novel. Granted it was difficult for anyone to write such a novel, but Davies clearly struggled with the need to write a queer narrative that never completely materialized. The closest he came to exploring a queer experience roughly paralleling his own is found, not, as one would hope, in his autobiography, but in the pages of *The Painted King*, which disguises, even as it stages, Davies's inability to develop a professionally gay identity.

There is much more to say about Rhys Davies, and I have not finished with him yet; but this dissertation paints as complete a picture as I can provide of one man's relationship to the literary market and how that relationship inflects a set of identities that I might otherwise have taken at face value. Many of the anxieties that I trace in Davies emerged most strongly, naturally, at the beginning of his career, when he set out as a young man to make his name in the company of such writers as Rupert Croft-Cooke, Liam O'Flaherty, and H. E. Bates. It is this period and this community of writers, especially as defined by the eccentric and enigmatic Charles Lahr and his Progressive Bookshop, that will set the course of my future research. Many regard D. H. Lawrence as the single most defining influence on Davies's career and, admittedly, his stamp is evident in much of Davies's writing; but Charles Lahr was, in other ways, an equally important influence without whom we may never have heard the name Rhys Davies. I would like, in my future research, to make Lahr visible as a cultural mediator of some importance. What was the significance of him and his Progressive Bookshop? Who was there? What did they talk about? And what, most importantly, did they take away with them? Davies was only one of the writers who owe Lahr and his bookshop a great debt, and I would like to make the acquaintance of more writers who may well provide further insights into the networks of literary production and circulation.

Appendix A

A Rhys Davies Bibliography

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